

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

Britain: one year after the
miners' strike

Permanent Revolution in
South Africa

The theory of imperialism:
the evolution of Lenin's thought

The Anti-Imperialist United Front

Theoretical Journal
of the
Workers Power Group

Spring
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Introduction

With this issue **Permanent Revolution** makes its reappearance after an absence of twenty months. This long gap, while regrettable, was unavoidable in the circumstances. The propaganda and agitational tasks that fell upon **Workers Power** during the 1984/5 miners' strike forced us to concentrate our resources elsewhere. Three pamphlets (**Women's oppression, women's liberation and Socialism; The Road to Working Class Power & Where Next for the NUM?**) together with a fortnightly paper for most of the strike inevitably delayed work intended for this journal. In addition we have produced seven issues of a **Workers Power** bulletin for miners, the **Red Miner**.

Events within the left since the defeat of the miners strike, however, have only served to underline the urgent need for our theoretical journal. The rapid shift to the right within the Parliamentary Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy over the last year (the nature and consequences of which are charted in the first article) has been accompanied by a crisis of direction within the far left.

Official Stalinism has split in two with the simmering disputes between the **Morning Star** and **Märxism Today** coming to a head over the drawing-up of a balance sheet of the NUM's Great Strike. The WRP was likewise unable to stay intact. The sectarian leadership of this organisation, personified by Gerry Healy, was unable to meet the challenge of the miners' strike with a realistic revolutionary strategy. Healy's rantings were no substitute for such a strategy, as many WRP members found out through their contact with the class struggle. The class struggle itself acted as a catalyst in the crisis of their organisation. The permanently faction-ridden Socialist League (British section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International) has been riven in two along the

Mandel-SWP (US) fault-line.

Within the Labour Party itself the left has undergone 're-alignment' around the question of Kinnock's leadership. **Tribune** and the LCC have 'defected' to Kinnock and the witch-hunters, taking with them the majority of the old municipalist left. At the other end the Labour Left Co-ordination is attempting to rally the 'hard left'.

In the struggle to establish political ground in this process of 'realignment' the reformist and centrist left rain down adjectives on each other. Take your pick. Do you belong to the 'participatory', 'soft', 'credible', 'broad' or 'cuddly' left? Or alternatively are you of the 'serious', 'class-struggle', 'macho', 'vanguardist', 'genuine', 'hard' or 'ghetto' left? As for **Permanent Revolution**, we prefer the admittedly older, but more honest, label 'revolutionary left', to describe its content and aims.

The creation of a revolutionary combat party remains the most burning need of the working class. The left will not be regrouped on a lasting basis, nor this party built, out of the simple adoption of one or more names. Profound differences of theory, programme, of strategy and tactics divide the left. **Permanent Revolution** exists to advance a revolutionary Trotskyist perspective and through this act as an "instrument for the creation of a revolutionary party" (Trotsky).

In this issue, we extend the debate on the question of the Anti-Imperialist United Front that we began in **Permanent Revolution** No. 2. Of fundamental importance within revolutionary strategy in the semi-colonial world is the question of the nature of political alliances between the working-class and non-proletarian forces in the struggle against imperialism and its national agents. The Iranian revolution, the Malvinas war; Bolivia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines to-day all present

this problem in different forms. The debate with the GOR of Italy on the revolutionary origin and later corruption of this tactic within the Comintern is contained here.

The article - **The Evolution of Lenin's Thought** - is the first of a series of articles on the theory of imperialism. We begin by tracing the evolution of Lenin's political economy, from his initial work on Russian capitalism to his pamphlet on Imperialism.

Permanent Revolution is the theoretical journal of **Workers Power**, but **Workers Power** itself is part of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI). The programmatic advance of the MRCI since the founding conference (see PR2) is registered here by the inclusion of the **Theses on South Africa**. These were subject to a thorough discussion in the sections of the MRCI (in Britain, Ireland, France, West Germany and Austria) before their adoption at a delegate conference on December 31st 1985. Outlined here in summary form is our collective view of the imperialist nature of South Africa, the development and role of Apartheid capitalism and the key elements of a programme necessary to bring total victory for the black masses.

In our review section we carry three major review articles. The rich lessons of the early experience of the Trotskyist CLA for a fighting propaganda group today stand out clearly from the two-volume collection of writings and speeches of James Cannon which cover the years 1928-34. The late 1920s and 1930s is also the focus of Bornstein and Richardson's stimulating book on the birth and early difficult years of British Trotskyism, which is also reviewed here. Finally, in the review of Richard Cornell's book **The Revolutionary Vanguard** the role of the youth movements in the Second International and early Comintern is examined.

One year after the miners' strike

The Thatcher government scored a decisive victory over the labour movement in 1985. After the defeat of the miners the official leaderships of the trade unions and Labour Party have moved decisively to the right dragging the dispirited and crisis-torn traditional left in their wake. Yet despite this victory the Tory government faces a pre-election period in which its political fortunes threaten to decline and its electoral base grow narrower.

The British bourgeoisie looked to Thatcher to apply drastic surgery on their behalf. She was expected to confront and defeat the organised working class and push up the sagging profitability of British capitalism. The plan was to let the slump rip through the economy and by not supporting ailing companies to end up with a leaner and more productive economy. It would lead to a massive shedding of labour thus increasing the productivity (and profitability) of what remained. In addition the great mass of unemployed would act as a pressure on the employed workforce to accept the loss of workplace rights, elements of shopfloor control and craft demarcation.

It was also envisaged that this would exert a powerful downward pressure on real wages. Throughout most of the economy this would be seen as the pressure of 'market forces'. The government itself would refuse to spend money to create jobs because these would not be what Thatcherspeak calls 'real jobs'.

There could be no question of state funded job creation. If that took place in profit-generating industry it would only result in yielding a profit below the average rate. If the spending was to take place in the non-market or social service sector it would constitute a further tax on profit. Either way was an anathema to a government whose fundamental task was and remains that of raising the rate and mass of profits.

In order to raise profits the subsidy-eating nationalised industries had to be cut down and if possible the 'profitable remnants' sold off - e.g. profitable parts of cars (British Leyland), steel, rail, coal; some £12.6bn of state assets. On the other hand highly profitable areas 'trapped' in the public sector such as telecommunications and its associated electronics and North Sea oil had to be 'liberated' under the guise of selling them to the 'public'. Social Services, health and education were to be reduced to a sort of poor law with a more opulent (and profitable) private sector for the professional middle classes and skilled workers.

Local government was to be hit by the big claw-back too. Labour local authorities had avoided the worst cuts of the Labour government and the first years of Thatcher by raising the rates. Whilst this hit working class families in many cities it hit retail and manufacturing capital

too. As a result spending ceilings and then rate capping were introduced to force local authorities to make drastic cuts in unprofitable expenditure.

The achievements of the Tories in the slump and subsequent recovery period have been extremely uneven and patchy. Between the first quarter of 1980 and the second quarter of 1981 Gross Domestic Product fell by 3.7%, while production contracted by a full 9%. Unemployment leapt by over one million to top the 2.5 million mark. In the slump phase of the cycle which reached its trough in mid-1981 profits slumped by 33% in real terms compared with their 1979 levels. The number of bankruptcies in 1982 was double the 1979 figure.

However the anticipated post-slump recovery did not arrive with the degree of vigour the Thatcherites promised and business circles had hoped for. Since the trough of the slump industrial production has only risen by 2.2% per year. In early 1986 manufacturing output is still 7% below 1979 levels. Only by mid-1985 had profits risen to their 1979 level in real terms and then only because of the enormous contribution of North Sea Oil. Net employment stopped falling in the first quarter of 1983, though unemployment continued to rise through the natural increase in the potential workforce.

But all of the increase in employment was in the service sector and a majority of this part-time or casual. Indeed the fall in the numbers employed in manufacturing has only been slowed down by the recovery, not halted. Today, there are less than five and a half million employed in manufacturing compared to 7.1 million in 1979. The drop in manufacturing as a share of GDP is a long term trend - 37% in 1955, 34% in 1965, 29% in 1975. The *Economist* estimates figures for 1985 will show a figure of 24%.

The great shake out of labour, the destruction of capital involved in widespread factory closures and bankruptcies did restore profit margins, output and exports during the period of recovery. British manufacturers' exports rose at an annual rate of 10% during 1984 and the first half of 1985. Output per worker hour rose at a rate of 5% a year between 1981 and early 1985 after seven years in which it had never shown more than a 1% rise a year. But there are few signs of gloating optimism in the ranks of the British boss class. All of the signs suggest the recovery is past its peak and that the British economy during 1986, along with the major capitalist economies, is now heading towards a recessionary phase in the cycle.

Equally important, there is mounting alarm that despite long dole queues and tough anti-union laws the Thatcherite recovery has not resulted in the erosion

in real wage levels vital to push up profit rates to a degree sufficient for British capitalism.

In *Permanent Revolution* No. 1 (Summer 1983) we wrote:

"If Thatcher is really to succeed in the task the bosses have set her she needs above all to bring about drastic cuts in real wage levels."

The *Economist* in 1983 was calling for 40% cuts in young workers' wages and for Reaganite "give back" wage cutting deals. In reality not only has such a wage cutting offensive not taken place yet, there have also been important factors working to delay that offensive.

Wage settlements for those in permanent employment have failed to mollify the Thatcherites. In 1983 earnings grew on average by 4%. At present they are growing at between 8.5% and 9.5%. The London Business School's Centre for Economic Forecasting is glumly predicting an average 7.5% growth for 1986-8 unless present trends can be reversed. Whereas in 1984 one quarter of US workers negotiated contracts involving a wage freeze or actual 'give backs' the June 1985 OECD report observed of Britain that employers had **"encountered strong real wage resistance, despite very high unemployment and comparatively stable inflation"**.

The reason for full time workers' wages on average keeping pace with inflation is partly a direct consequence of Thatcher's boom. Employers have been reluctant to risk disrupting production through confrontation at a time when they have been benefiting from a boom in the export of manufactured goods - 13.5% of the volume of British manufactured goods were exported in 1984. This itself was intensified by the fall of sterling against the dollar. Another vital factor was the miners' strike itself. In order to isolate and defeat the NUM the bosses were forced to buy off sector after sector to keep them off the battlefield alongside the miners. Finally, there is the traditional rigidity in the labour market whereby skilled or semi-skilled workers are relatively immune from the pressures of the dole queue.

With recession looming the employers must now make a serious drive to reduce real wages in order to increase profits, hence, the "nowt for nowt" theme of the 1985

CBI conference which urged industrialists to strictly limit wage increases to comparable increases in productivity. Their victory over the miners will make it all the more vital for the capitalists to attempt to reap the fruits of their victory. Despite their gains under Thatcher, Britain's capitalists are acutely aware that their labour costs are too high and labour productivity low compared with their rivals. Labour productivity is 50% higher in France and West Germany and 100% higher in the US and Japan. Labour costs in France, for example, are 20% lower on average than those of the British capitalists.

CURBS ON THE PUBLIC SECTOR

If the bosses must attempt to push forward their class interests more vigorously on the wages front so too do they have little room for complacency in their attempt to dramatically prune public spending. The social security budget has soared as the dole queues have lengthened. It has risen 30% since 1979 reaching £40 billion in 1985. Law and order and defence spending have increased by 27% and 25% respectively. Health spending has grown in real terms but not sufficient to keep pace with the increased needs of the growing number of the ill and the elderly.

The miners' strike forced a £3 billion overshoot in the government's 1984/85 public borrowing requirement. Local government spending remains stubbornly above 20% of all public expenditure. If the Tories are to cut public spending and pave the way for £1.5 billion worth of electioneering tax cuts they have little room for manoeuvre. They must attack public sector workers whose wages account for 70% of all public spending. Having failed to save desperately needed funds by abolishing the State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS), reforming the rating system or abolishing student grants, they must target local government spending for a further round of attacks.

Hanging over the Tories is also the cloud of mounting economic uncertainty. Not only is a recession looming but leading sectors of industry feel increasingly squeezed by high interest rates and the consequent strong pound which benefits financial capital considerably. They object to the tendency for such high interest rates to stimulate the growth of short term speculative investment rather than investment in manufacturing industry. They see the "strong pound" as a major threat to their recent advances into export markets.

Crucially, 1985 was the peak year for Britain's North Sea Oil revenue. Moreover, a new oil price war threatens in 1986. The collapse of oil prices would have far-reaching implications for the British economy. In the 1980's profits from North Sea Oil have propped up the sagging profits in the rest of the economy. Oil exports have compensated for the decline in manufacturing exports. Further deterioration therefore means a substantial fall in profits, a shortfall in government revenues (thus reducing the scope for tax cuts) and a crisis of confidence in sterling. Taken all together we can say that in 1986 no economic miracles will come to the aid of Thatcher's government. Only political manoeuvres on her part, and political weaknesses on the part of our class can hope to save her.

The Labour Party's pathetic hope is that disillusionment will lead part of industry's captains to break with Thatcher and the City. This is a utopia. There is little evidence that important sections of the top industrialists will break with the Thatcherites in the immediate period ahead. As Lenin pointed out finance capital is a "fusion" of banking with industrial monopoly capitalism. Leading manufacturers act as banks or finance houses themselves with both British Petroleum (BP) and ICI recently creating formal banks competing openly on the money markets.

Of course, the weakening of its domestic industrial



base will cause the British bourgeoisie pangs of distress. But the fact is that a higher rate of profit can be earned abroad as the figures for the outflow of capital testify.

BOSSES PRESS AHEAD

The bosses will continue to press ahead with their attacks on the working class, building on their successes of the last few years. Central to their strategy has been, and will continue to be, the restructuring of the labour force. Unemployment has now trebled since 1979. The army of unemployed has over three million in its ranks even according to official figures- which are doctored to exclude school leavers and those on dead end YTS schemes.

In turn rising unemployment has been accompanied by major restructuring of patterns of employment. Part-time working has been growing rapidly. In 1980, 20% of those employed were part-time workers. On present trends that figure could reach 25% by 1990 with 2.5 million more full time jobs disappearing. This has also meant an increase in the number of employed women workers- both relatively and absolutely. Between 1979 and 1983 there was a 1% drop in the number of women joining the workforce. That tendency has been reversed between 1983 and 1985. This is overwhelmingly accounted for by the rise in part-time working.

The rise in part-time working is only one element in the development of what the employers own ideologues brazenly like to call the bifurcation of the labour force between 'core' workers (skilled, permanently employed) and 'peripheral' workers (unskilled, easily hired and fired, low waged).

The bosses own press is making no secret of its intentions. The *Financial Times* reported on 21 August that:

"Companies are re-organising their workers in novel ways to increase the flexibility of their labour force, according to a report commissioned by the Employment Department to be published soon. The report . . . shows how companies are moving to what it calls a 'dual labour market' - a core of secure workers separated from a periphery of workers on temporary contracts, working part-time or employed by sub-contractors."

Paul Roots - Ford's Industrial Relations Director- has gone to print advocating:

"a split in the workforce between those workers who have marketable skills, predominantly in the more secure jobs with fringe benefits of pensions, sick-pay and all the rest of it, and the other half who are hewers of wood and drawers of water".

Alongside the reserve army of unemployed labour the bourgeoisie is out to create a pool of expendable, disposable, low paid and non-unionised de-skilled labour. This will serve to cut labour costs and dampen the wage demands of core workers whose fear of redundancy, 'pricing themselves out of a job' and thus falling into the pit of peripheral insecurity is supposed to make them see it the bosses way.

To this extent we are experiencing a deliberate and sustained drive to increase differentials and erode demarcation and craft distinctions outside the ranks of a privileged labour aristocratic few. The Tories are actively encouraging this process.

The time required in employment before unfair dismissal claims can be made has been extended from one to two full-time years. We know all too well how toothless the procedures are. However it is now the case that 25% of full time male workers and 33% of full time women workers fall into the unprotected category. No part-time workers qualify.

Protection for low paid workers has also been removed by the government's attack on wages councils. Spurred on by the Institute of Directors the government has removed half a million young workers from the wages council system that covers the pay of 2.75 million low paid workers. This has led to the relative decline of the real wages of low paid workers and, particularly, young workers. It has led to an increase in the number of low paid short term contracted workers. The government hopes to speed up this process when the budget's new National Insurance Agreements come into force. They give the incentives to bosses to employ at low rates of pay (under £90 per week) and replace full-time with part-time workers.

The employers have secured major achievements in these directions. As we have seen, since 1979 skilled manual workers have seen their real wages increase however marginally. In comparison the real income of the unemployed has fallen by 18% and the number of male manual workers falling into the official low paid category has increased from 10% to 20%. 80% of women workers fall into the low paid category in 1985 compared with 65% in 1979.

Young workers have borne the heaviest burden both of unemployment and the creation of a poverty line workforce. Under the Tories young male manual workers between 18 and 20 have suffered a 3% cut in real wages while their class sisters have seen a 2% cut. On the whole, young manual workers under the age of 18 have lost 6%. Official unemployment figures for 18-19 year olds (despite the falsification systems) have stood steadily at, or over, 25% since 1982. For those aged between 20 and 24 it has stood consistently at around 20%. The



John Harris (JFL)

The Great Strike - Orgreave 1984

bosses want to drive down the real living standards of those who have managed to secure employment and cut into the meagre provisions afforded to the young unemployed.

LABOUR MOVEMENT RESPONSE

It is in this context that it is necessary to coldly examine the response of the labour movement to the Thatcher offensive and the state of the organised working class in the aftermath of the miners defeat.

Under Thatcher, while the official leadership has retreated at every stage in the face of attacks, the organised workforce has mounted serious resistance. 1984 saw the largest number of working days lost to the bosses since 1979. This shows quite how absurd the SWP's downturn theory has been over the past years. Doubtless the SWP would claim those figures were artificially inflated by the miners but they forget that in most major class struggle years, strike figures are heavily coloured by particular major strikes - the engineers accounted for 54% of 1979 strike days, steel workers accounted for 74% in 1980 and health workers 42% in 1982. The miners accounted for 82% of an exceptionally high register of stoppages. All the signs however now indicate that the defeat of the miners has served eventually to dampen the combativity of organised workers.

The scale of the miners defeat must be squarely faced up to. As a result of the defeat, the NCB have been able to tighten the managerial screw and trample on customary review and negotiation procedures. They are now set on a two year offensive which, if successful, will slash the workforce in half and close entire coalfields. The scab UDM has considerably strengthened the hand of the NCB. There is widespread demoralisation amongst the crack troops of the British working class. No amount of official optimism from Arthur Scargill can obscure that fact.

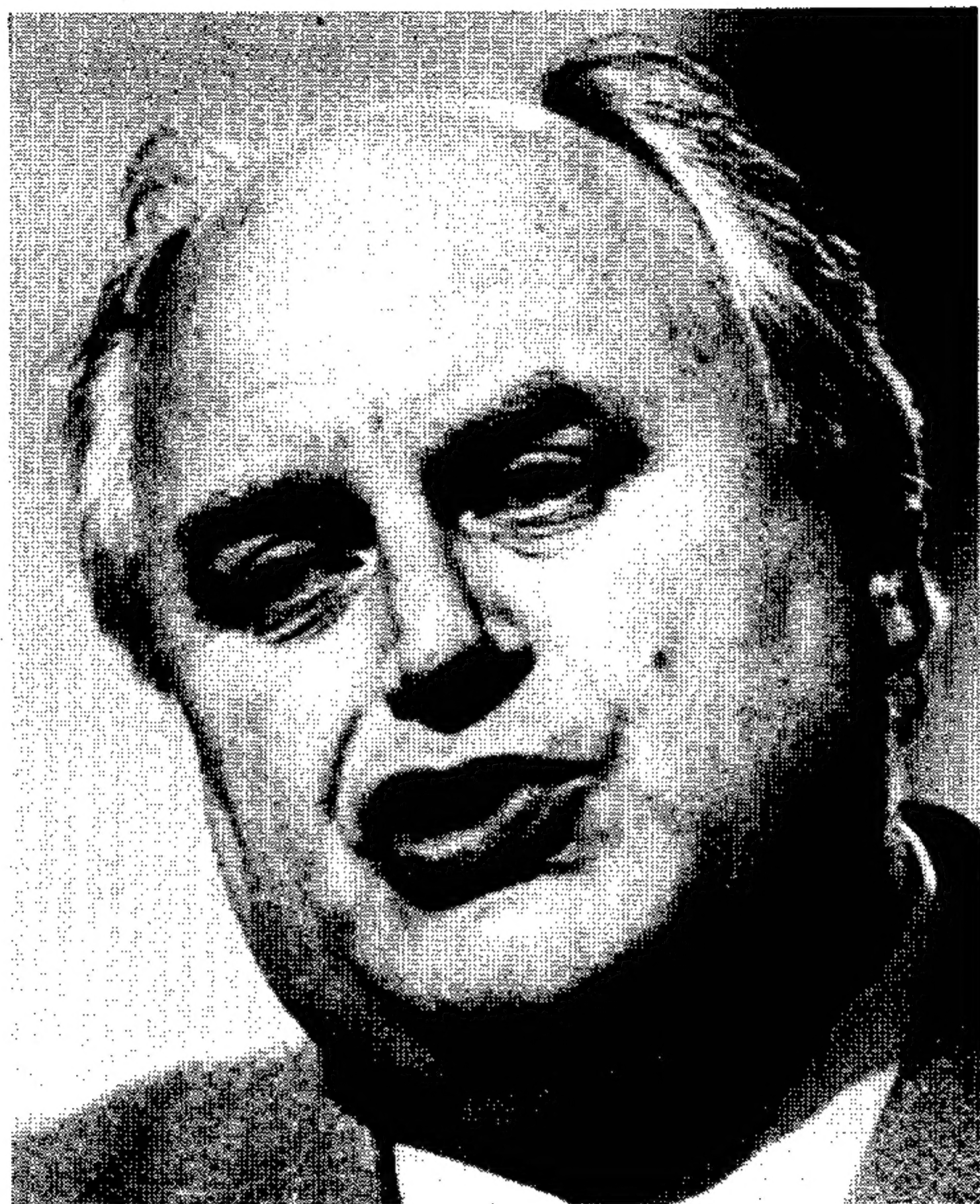
The leadership forces in the NUM who recognise the reality of the defeat have drawn all the wrong lessons from that defeat. The miners lost because their strike remained isolated and did not become spearhead of a generalised class offensive to break Thatcher. Arthur Scargill remained wedded to that recipe for the miners strike as did the NUM executive itself. The treachery of the TUC only served to strengthen that course. The 'soft left' on the NUM executive see things differently. Aided and abetted by the CP and Kinnock they have set their sights on never repeating such militancy again. That 'soft left' now dominate the NUM's executive. Unless they are stopped the scabs and the NCB will be appeased and 'Scargillism' (i.e. militancy) denigrated.

Scargill is now trapped by the logic of his own bureaucratic politics. Rounded on by his erstwhile allies in the Broad Left he cannot break out of the charmed bureaucratic circle and organise the militants to resist the retreat. The militants belief in Scargill fixing it for them is undermining their independent vigilance and action. In the NUM it is crucial that the militants are politically organised to resist both the NCB's post-strike offensive and those in the leadership who would retreat before it.

The election of Des Dufield against a Kinnockite for President of the South Wales area shows that there are still thousands of miners who know they must fight again. Unless they can reverse the course of the union the advanced guard of British workers will have been effectively silenced as a decisive political and industrial force. Nothing less is at stake in the coalfields today.

BUREAUCRATS ARE ASCENDANT

Such was the fatal isolation of the miners' strike that its defeat did not have the immediate effect of damp-



Norman Willis

ening down the class struggle. In the months following the miners' strike there were major battles on the part of Post Office workers, teachers, railworkers and ship-builders. Yet by the end of 1985 the strike figures had fallen dramatically as the bosses notched up new victories in the Post Office and on the railways. The militant minority in the unions is becoming increasingly isolated as the TUC prepares to abandon its formal commitment to oppose the anti-union laws and is increasingly using the ballot weapon to isolate the militant activists.

There is no doubt that the trade union bureaucracy has capitalised to the full on the defeat of the miners and the resulting demoralisation in the rank and file of the trade unions.

In the face of massive job cuts and successive rounds of anti-union legislation the trade union bureaucracy has consistently run scared on any confrontation with the law and the government. The Wembley Conference posturings of 1981 against the anti-union laws were exposed as the NGA, the NUM and the TGWU were all left to bear the savage burden of the new laws. Subsequent left talk against the brazen 'New Realists' like Graham has been shown up as a sham by the reality of official trade unionism in all key battles, in the face of the laws and in direct relation with the employers themselves.

Every major union is now complying with ballots under the Tories' anti-union laws. The bureaucracy has done so not only because it does not want a showdown with Thatcher but also crucially because it itself has discovered the delights of the ballot as a means of tightening its grip on its own membership. It provides the officials with the perfect means of isolating the militants while giving betrayal a democratic mantle. Jimmy Knapp's performance on the railways is one that the trade union bureaucracy in general would like to emulate - action in response to blatant intimidation was held back pending a ballot which in due course gave him the desired mandate to climb down.

It is not simply a matter of the TUC chiefs complying with the law and the bosses terms at a national govern-

mental level. Such cringeing has gone hand in hand with an increasing epidemic of sweetheart deals between individual employers and unions. This has not been the sole prerogative of the EETPU, but it has set the pace. Since its 1984 no-strike deal with Hitachi the EETPU has made similar deals with Toshiba and Sanyo and is now set to make one union non-strike deals in the print industry, thus excluding the traditional print unions from the plants.

The other major unions are following suit. The AUEW joined the EETPU in accepting government funding for ballots. Both the TGWU and GMBATU competed with the EETPU over the Nissan deal. Both have signed an agreement with Nabisco that all action will be banned unless there has been a secret ballot of the entire workforce. The TGWU has balloted the Heinz workforce on the closed shop in compliance with the law.

Despite its criticisms of others the TGWU has struck its own deals similar to the EETPU on the docks and ferries and has its own in-house understanding with the Welsh Development Agency to have first option on offering harmonious and strife-free industrial relations to new employers. Ken Gill's TASS has been circulating high tech companies with invitations to joint seminars on "good in-company communication in industrial relations" that require "the effective management of change". Faced with EETPU's deal with Shah, Dubbins of the NGA has said that either they must strengthen their links with the TGWU or come to terms with the new realism of sweetheart unionism.

Vauxhall has succeeded in securing a deal that guarantees management the right to automatically replace any striking section of the workforce. At the traditionally well organised Shell Carrington plant the employers have gained the union's consent for the abolition of all existing demarcation and grading agreements, thus giving management virtually complete flexibility of labour even between white collar and manual tasks. While the officials clutch at such deals as their life line, shop steward organisation has been dramatically eroded amongst the traditionally organised sectors of the manual industrial working class.

The right shift at the top of the unions had its pace set by the right wing bureaucrats in the EETPU and also in the AUEW who wanted to secure their base by closer collaboration with the employers and by avoiding conflict with the Government. The EETPU is quite prepared to split with the TUC rather than alter its course of consolidating itself as a yellow union and nurturing all projects

to create similar unions. The AUEW is more reluctant to loose the protection of Bridlington that TUC membership affords it. Hence its mild criticisms of EETPU's poaching in the print.

EETPU and the AUEW have been allowed to brazenly flaunt any and every decision of the TUC they happened to disagree with. They did so on union laws, they stabbed the miners in the back and chose to take Tory gold for their ballots. The 'left' and so-called 'centre' allowed them to do this. The TUC have reached a fudge on Tory cash that will allow the right to continue to take money and the rest of the bureaucracy time to either come round to their way of thinking or avert a showdown with them.

FOR CLASS-STRUGGLE UNIONS

It is the treachery of the 'left' leaders that has allowed them to do this. In the face of the hard nosed Tories it is they who have become the most pernicious purveyors of the view that nothing can be done except to accept management's demands and thus "keep one's powder dry" waiting for a Labour government to come to the rescue. The Broad Left machines that secured office for these 'lefts' have proved powerless to challenge or control them.

In the CPSA, an executive majority has been handed to Graham by the split in the Broad Left between the CP's Broad Left '84 and a distinct Militant-led Broad Left. In NUPE the Broad Left based leadership has no appetite for a further round of national struggle. It can conceive of no major defence or improvement of its membership's conditions or standards outside the return of a Labour government. In tow to Kinnock, their conference too contained attacks on Militant and an attempt to turn NUPE into a campaigning body for the election of a Labour government.

Ron Todd of the TGWU has been similarly creating ample room for himself to manoeuvre the TGWU into backing Kinnock's demands in the run up to the election. As he put it recently "we do not want statutory or enforced wage restraint. But equally we do not want to be restrained in the subjects we discuss".

The drive of the bureaucracy to tighten their grip on their members fits in with its desire to present its bureaucratic self as a force with the power to deliver a bargain should the bosses agree to do one with them.



Scab leader Hammond (EETPU), with Gavin Laird (AUEW)

Tuffin of the UCW is a good example here. He hijacked his own conference by presenting it with the fait accompli of mechanisation deals struck with management and secured reversal of union policy so as to allow him to co-operate with the Post Office's plans for a major shift towards the employment of part-time labour.

For Tuffin and co the threat posed by the AUEW and EETPU was not their scabby and treacherous actions. He showed that all too well at the 1985 UCW conference. What upset him and his like was that in breaking ranks the AUEW and EETPU were undermining the TUC's collective credibility. As he put it himself:

"My worry over the AUEW matter is that we lose credibility. Then, when we make an agreement with a Labour government and people start breaking ranks, pleading special cases on pay, what can we do? If we say to Labour - that's a deal - people will say: 'Can we believe that? Can we deliver? They didn't before'."

In periods of acute capitalist instability and a hard nosed bosses offensive the forces of class collaborationist trade unionism inevitably become more brazen just as the fake left leaders behave all the more feebly. It should come as no surprise therefore that the pressure for splits and scab unions should have become more acute in the trade union movement. On the road to working class power the TUC and its component unions will surely divide between forces set on class collaboration at any price and those prepared to wage the class struggle. Communists must not flinch from that split.

That is why we are for the expulsion of unions that betray or destroy the fighting unity of the working class. Most specifically at the present time it is necessary to fight for the EETPU and its associates to be driven out of the TUC. The TUC and Labour Party leaders fear such a clash like the plague. Kinnock dreads having to make an open choice between a Hammond/Lynk tame-cat outfit and a TUC that has Scargill's NUM in its ranks.

RALLY THE MILITANT MINORITY

The period between now and the next General Election will be a difficult one for the rank and file militants in the unions. Kinnock and the union chiefs will be keen to prevent 'labour troubles' disrupting Kinnock's electoral strategy.

Nevertheless, struggles will erupt in resistance to the bosses attacks. But given the recent defeats it is likely that resistance to these attacks will be fragmented. In the public sector the privatisation offensive and attack on the CPSA have so far been difficult to resist in a generalised fashion. Divisions between the unions in the print industry coupled with the labour aristocratic position of the Fleet Street workforce will both weaken the resistance and undermine the potential for securing the kind of support and sympathy the miners received from rank and file workers.

The bureaucracy will be able to tighten its grip so long as that fragmentation continues. Militants will have to pose sharp political alternatives to the bureaucracy and Kinnock and will be less and less likely to find that appeals to traditional trade union principles are sufficient to make the members fight when the leaders are ordering a retreat.

This isolation of the militants, the impact of the miners' defeat and the pressure to shut up so as to get Kinnock to power is likely to sharpen divisions within the Broad Lefts. In general the Stalinists and Labour lefts will try to drag them even further to the right. This is likely to lead to a certain strengthening of pockets of rank and file-ism. There are some signs of unofficial cross-union links being forged on Fleet Street as SOGAT and the NGA announced they were prepared to co-operate with the bosses. While the fight to build a national

cross-union rank and file movement committed to stopping the retreat is vital it must be based on a sound political alternative to the traditional lefts.

The danger is always that such important flickers of minority organisation will lack any meaningful or distinct political alternative to the verbiage of traditional Broad Left or militant trade unionism. In this case they can become a recruiting ground for a refurbished left in the trade unions as the most able are whisked away to schools and courses for budding left bureaucrats. They could also serve as little more than communication lines between isolated militants, keeping them warm but not breaking their isolation where it really counts through direct political struggle against the union bureaucracy.

There are no signs of the government softening its approach to the unions. Employment Secretary Young's offer to talk to the unions about jobs is a bid to improve the Tory's public image and comes after Thatcher was suitably impressed by the TUC's fawning at the close of the miners' strike. Yet the TUC's reward will simply be a Thatcherite package to hold down wage increases and encourage job flexibility in the interests of 'boosting' employment prospects.

The TUC can no more afford to accept Young and Thatcher's terms than it can dare lead a fight against them. To accept them is to hand the Tories an important victory as the union tamers. To refuse them risks the TUC being branded as the force that resisted the flexible work practices in the interests of the skilled, selfish and employed few. Either way round the Tories have nothing to lose by offering talks.

The Tories have another important bargaining counter with the TUC chiefs who want to come in from the cold. That is the threat of a further round of anti-union legislation. The Tories have maintained a bi-annual stream of punitive legislation. At every stage 'wets' in their ranks have said enough was enough and gone down to defeat. Thatcher and her closest associates would doubtless want to crown their second government with laws making it necessary to opt in, rather than out, of the political levy.

They want - in concert with the SDP - to replace workplace or union branch secret ballots (of the sort that produced Ron Todd and thumping majorities for the political levies) with the even more indirect, atomised and long drawn out process of postal balloting. They want to outlaw strikes in key service industries. Their earnest here was shown by their refusal to budge on GCHQ. We should presume the Tories still have their sights set on such gains for their class and that, at the very least, the threat of such legislation (at present those close to the government describe it as 'not ruled out') will be used to cajole the TUC into collaboration.

THE SITUATION IN THE LABOUR PARTY

Ever since the 1983 election the Labour Party has been moving sharply to the right. Important shibboleths of the left - outright opposition to the Common Market, commitments to unilateral disarmament and abandonment of "Britain's independent nuclear deterrent", have been trashed by a series of policy statements or declarations by Kinnock on what a Labour government would or would not implement.

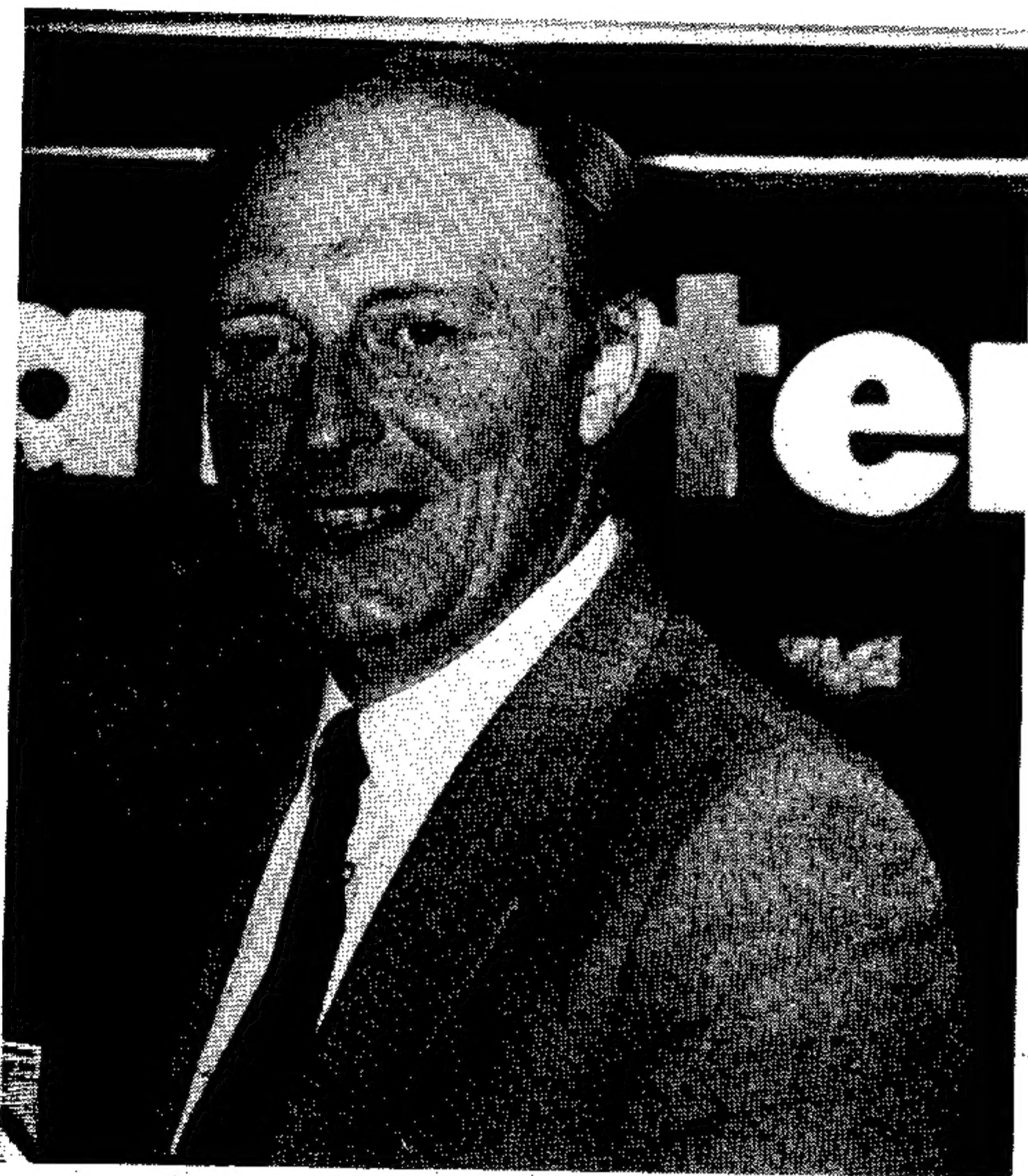
Via the TUC - Labour Party Liaison Committee (which represents the Shadow Cabinet, the NEC of the LP and the General Council of the TUC) the idea of a new incomes policy (at present named 'The National Economic Agreement') was cautiously put into place. Hattersley wants such a commitment firmed up before the next General Election. The central idea is for corporate 'discussion' between the state, the employers and the unions to set 'norms' or targets for wages, prices and investment levels.

Economist has cruelly but accurately referred as 'Old Hat'. The idea of incomes policy is still not acceptable to the decisive sectors of the ruling class. Neither the CBI, the Institute of Directors nor obviously any major figures in the City have issued any calls for anything approaching it. They are opposed to any extra-economic or non-business pressures being brought to bear on their investment decisions. Nor are they willing to allow any interference in their pricing policies.

The Labour left's influence on economic policy is at an all time low. Planning, state ownership, intervention let alone nationalisation are all on the way out. Even the re-nationalisation that is envisaged is extremely partial. Labour's promises with respect to unemployment are minimal. Hattersley has brazenly rejected 'full employment' as no longer possible. Labour's promise in 1983 to cut the dole queue by two million over five years is now rubbished as wild utopianism.

When it comes to repeal of the Tories vicious anti-union laws Kinnoch and Hattersley are equally evasive. Whilst they promise to repeal them they relate this to discussions with the union leaders on "the whole range of issues". This is a veiled condition - agree to the NEA, agree to accept compulsory balloting perhaps, and we will replace the Tory anti-union laws. The only difference will be that the Tories' laws embroil the bureaucracy whereas Labour's will doubtless let them off the hook in return for a double strait-jacket on the militants.

The whole trajectory of the Kinnochites is to move Labour dramatically to the Right under cover of a smoke-screen of 'caring, sharing' windbagery. Yet despite all this Labour hovers around the 30-35% mark in the opinion polls. Labour is unlikely to benefit from the Tories' unpopularity and decline if the labour movement is itself a cowed and spent force either in terms of trade union struggle or in terms of Labour local authorities putting up a fight.



Witch-hunter Kinnoch

To have a hope in hell of carrying out his policies Kinnoch must crush the Left within the base of the party and then crush and discredit the left within the unions. The weakness and half-heartedness of the Bennite Left has given him victory after victory. They failed to go

all out to oust Callaghan, Healey and the right. The electoral cretinism and dyed-in-the-wool opportunism of the Bennites led them to cease their offensive and to surrender vital elements of the democracy and accountability necessary to stop the right repeating the record of Wilson and Callaghan.

As we said at the time of the 1979-81 democratic reforms, only the subordination of the PLP, leader, shadow cabinet and MPs to the instructions of conference and the NEC would allow for significant accountability and control. And democracy - the rule of the majority of a conscious and informed membership - would only be possible if the block vote was taken from the hands of the bureaucrats into the rank and file of the unions' affiliated members.

The left reformists failed to secure the most damaging of these reforms to the parliamentary mandarins - control by conference of the manifesto. The PLP can now spurn conference decisions with thinly disguised contempt. Kinnoch has arrogated to himself more personal power than any previous Labour leader. In the coming two years he will use it with a vengeance.

He has launched the beginnings of a massive purge, at the Bournemouth Conference and with the enquiry into the Liverpool District Party. Utilising Militant's hopeless tactical fiasco - the sending out of notices of dismissal to the council's employees - he has given the signal for re-launching the attack to oust them from the party. He is being aided by ex-left wingers and by the numerous forces that Militant's tactics have alienated.

Militant are further playing into the right's hands by attempting to oppose the Kinnochites with a 'more in sorrow than in anger' defensive posture. They whine about unity and ruining Labour's electoral chances. This small-change of reformism can always be outbid by Kinnoch with his MPs and the media circus. If winning the next election and unity is the prime goal to which everything must be sacrificed, then LP members and TU affiliates will eventually conclude that even sacrificing 4,000 Militants and perhaps 2,000 'Bennites' (genuine left-reformists, pseudo or crypto-Trotskyists, etc) is a smaller price to pay than causing another SDP-style split with the House of Commons prima-donnas.

A key element in any serious resistance to the right is the attitude to Kinnoch's leadership. Heffer, Benn, Scargill and Derek Hatton have all declared their determination to put him into Number 10. This is integrally linked to the belief that 'we must have a Labour government at all costs', or that 'any Labour government would be better than the Tories'. Nearly all the centrists try to combine support for ongoing struggles (rate-capped councils or the miners) with electoral success, by claiming that the former is the best way to the latter. This is unconvincing rubbish. We have to be clear, support for working class struggles and working class interests stand higher than electoral success. There must be no holding back to install an anti-working class Labour government.

As for Kinnoch and Hattersley, they should not be the next PM and Chancellor of the Exchequer. They should have been challenged in 1984 for their scabbing on the miners and certainly again in 1985. The failure of the 'lefts' to censure and condemn their record and stand against them opened them up to Kinnoch's offensive. To accept Kinnoch as party leader is to fight with both hands tied behind their back.

It is now clear that the defeat of the NUM has enormously strengthened Kinnoch and the Labour right in the party and the unions. Kinnoch played a cowardly, treacherous but necessarily secondary role in the strike. Now he has taken the lead in attacking the NUM and trade union militancy in general. His attack stems from the very essence of reformism. It says "we will rule within the framework of the capitalist state and its legality", we will expect the law to work for us then and must therefore abide by it when it works against us now. It

is an argument Benn and Scargill have no answer to. Neither have the militant municipal councils who fell to Thatcher one by one.

On what basis can resistance be mounted the right's attack? Firstly, there can be no separation between the fight for democratic rights and the fight against Kinnock's political objectives. These objectives are to extinguish the flames of class struggle resistance to Thatcher and consolidate the Labour Party as a fire brigade of legalism and social-pacifism. He wants to prune from Labour's programme all those demands that represent, however inadequately, pressing working class needs that clash sharply with what the bosses are ready and willing to concede. He hopes for electoral success on the basis of a wage restraining 'incomes policy'. This can be presented to the working class as 'fair shares' and as helping the 'low paid' whilst recommending itself to the bosses for what it always has been and always will be - a system for cutting real wages.

Last but not least, should a massive renewed economic crisis co-incide with an indecisive election Kinnock wants to make sure that the PLP (in consultation with the TUC) has the room to manoeuvre to enter a National Government or an anti-Thatcher coalition. It would be suicidal for him to admit this openly or in advance of an election. He and the TUC must emphasise their unique position - from which they can control the working class and assure the bosses a peaceful and orderly surrender. They must prove that no government excluding organised labour could carry out the austerity measures that a new deepening of the crisis of British capitalism will bring with it.

None of this stands in contradiction to holding out for an independent Labour government and denouncing coalitions. It is the old game of playing hard to get. But if Labour's 'realistic programme' is only a whisker's breadth from the Alliance's then when the time for talking coalition starts, it will be relatively easy for Kinnock to persuade a special conference to 'unite' against Thatcher. The ground is being well prepared within the Labour Movement by the 'Broad Democratic Alliance' Euro-communists.

Two political tasks face revolutionaries within the Labour Party. One of them is to fight to form a united front of all those forces willing to fight the witch-hunts, the expulsions, all attacks on LP democracy; to support whole-heartedly and in practice every section of workers

in struggle against the Tories, whether it be legal or illegal; to fight Kinnock's programme of class collaboration and surrender of working class gains; and to struggle for uncompromising internationalism and anti-racism at home and abroad.

We earlier commented that the key to the Thatcher government's future lay in its ability to politically manoeuvre. There are no signs that the economy will come to her rescue between now and the general election. The 1981 riots, the miners' strike and the 1985 riots all testify to the massive well-spring of hatred for this government that exists amongst black and white youth and amongst white trade unionists. Faced with declining electoral fortunes Thatcher will increasingly resort to playing the law and order card and could well play the openly racist card if her situation becomes desperate.

In order to shore up her government and hold down those that it offers only the misery of the dole queue Thatcher has created a centralised national police force armed to the teeth to bust pickets and urban riots. While the 1981 riots produced a liberal response in the form of Scarman's recommendations the liberal pretences of community policing and beefing up the race relations industry ran aground in the face of accumulating social misery and Thatcher's anti-street crime orders to the police.

All of this makes the need to combat racism and to forge bonds of solidarity between organised workers and every manifestation of resistance by the black community all the more urgent. The alternative is yet another round of increased violence and intimidation against the most oppressed and impoverished victims of Thatcher's Britain.

In her dealings with the Ulster Loyalists Thatcher is also seeking to provide another triumph for the Iron Lady, one that adds Ian Paisley's head to that of General Galtieri and Arthur Scargill. The aim of the Anglo-Irish accord was to help isolate the electorally buoyant Sinn Fein, pave the way for a new round of repression against them and prop up the most reliable allies in the thirty two county state. Predictably the Official Unionists and Orange Order could be guaranteed to respond with marches and street confrontations with the RUC. It remains unlikely, this will reach the proportions of the Ulster Workers' Strike. Yet Thatcher hopes to claim the victor's laurels and thus pep up her declining electoral fortunes.

There are mounting signs that Thatcher's forays into international diplomacy are attracting unfavourable res-



John Harris (IFL)

ponses from within the ranks of the ruling class. She has little support for her refusal to talk to Alfonsin. She has even been criticised by the **Economist** for her intransigence on South African sanctions. Her expulsion of Soviet 'spies' was a shoot out that Gorbachev clearly won. The British bourgeoisie looks set to do badly out of contracts to modernise the technological base of Soviet industry.

Thatcher's political blunders are increasingly distancing sections of her traditionally closest allies from her political record. Heseltine's departure and the whole Westland affair underlined that reality most clearly. In its turn the elder statesmen of the ruling class through the Lords, the Church and the CBI are expressing deep fears about the economic and social disorder that Thatcher's policies have produced.

The ruling class is having to seriously consider the options should 'their' Tory Party fail to secure a majority at the next elections. Every serious indication points to the fact that if the Tories' base continues to crumble it will be the Alliance Parties that will present the only means for the bourgeoisie avoiding a Labour government.

The Alliance can now rival the Tories and Labour. This means that serious changes have occurred in the class alignment of voting during the period of economic and social crises that opened in the early 1970s. Not only will this not end it will be intensified in the late 1980s and consequently we can expect great political changes. It is wrong to imagine that the ruling class can regulate its own political representation, just as it wishes. It has to steer a course through its own internal differences and contradictions as a class and direct other classes and sections of classes into blocing behind its chosen political instrument.

The Tories know their electoral situation is a serious one. The Alliance are now pressing the Tories hard in the salaried middle class and also pressuring the Labour Party where the latter has little chance or where scab unions are strong as in Nottinghamshire.

The weakness of the Alliance remains the fact that its policies are amorphous and fluctuating; a bit of Toryism wherever it is anti-union (Owen and Steel were fierce urgers-on of Thatcher against the miners); a bit of right wing Labourism when it comes to mixing welfarism with an incomes policy. An Alliance government would aim at a return to late Heath style Toryism. In reality the crisis will drive it against the working class with renewed vigour because of the social forces it had mobilised against the working class. The strong man of the Alliance is David Owen, who drew the compliments of Walter Goldsmith (head of the Institute of Directors), "Mrs Thatcher risks being outflanked on the right" and recommended that both him and Tebbit could ably be "the next

Conservative prime minister". So far to the right is he that Roy Jenkins is now in opposition to him from the left!

The Alliance's electoral strategy necessitates them keeping mum about which party they would form an alliance with if they succeed in 'hanging' the parliament. Owen would obviously prefer the Tories plus or minus Thatcher. The Liberal's would probably prefer a chastened Labour Party with a house trained TUC thrown in for good measure, since incomes policy is a central strategy for them.

Over the next two years - if it runs that far - Thatcher's government will be driven to harsher, more crude and repressive measures to maintain itself against a population which increasingly despises it. The depth of the coming recession will be a critical factor in relation both to splits and divisions within the ruling class and the tempo of the class struggle.

At the moment the weight of the miners' defeat is being felt to the full and we are still only at the plateau of the boom. The descent into slump is normally a sparking point for serious resistance struggles. These will be discouraged by the defeat of the miners but encouraged by the government's unpopularity and difficulties. If the fightback does not take place the new slump will throw hundreds of thousands or even millions more on the dole.

The only certainty is that a new revolutionary vanguard party must be built by assembling the best learners of the lessons of defeat, those who are not demoralised by set backs and difficulties. The class struggle is not a relentless and inevitable, peaceful "forward march of labour" but a series of bloody battles, defeats and regroupments until the forces are assembled for a decisive victory. Communists have little in common with the would-be peaceful world of the trade union secretary or the parliamentarian. We have to be able to chart our course through the storms of a society in convulsions. The lack of a Labour government or even the splitting of time honoured trade unions cannot be cause for us to despair.

Neither can the convulsive crisis that has hit the 'far left' give us any cause for despondency. The splits in the CPGB, the WRP, and in the British Section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) are all indications that the accelerated period of crisis and conflict is destroying the credibility of the degenerate and bankrupt traditions of the left. In their own way they too show that we are moving relentlessly from a period of social peace towards one of social revolution. And here we are optimists about our own class: we believe it can learn the lessons and forge the revolutionary party in time. We believe it will win.

Theory of imperialism

part one:

The evolution of Lenin's thought

Quentin Rudland

This year we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the appearance of Lenin's famous pamphlet **Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism**. Written during the first six months of 1916, Lenin judged the purpose of his work as follows:

"I trust that this pamphlet will help the reader to understand the fundamental economic question, that of the economic essence of imperialism, for unless this is studied it will be impossible to understand and appraise modern war and modern politics."¹

In the second preface Lenin added:

"... the main purpose of the book was, and remains, to present, on the basis of summarised returns of irrefutable bourgeois statistics, and the admissions of bourgeois scholars of all countries, a composite picture (Lenin's emphasis) of the world capitalist system in its international relationships at the beginning of the twentieth century - on the eve of the first world imperialist war."²

In these passages Lenin establishes a dual theoretical problem which must be clearly understood from the beginning. **Imperialism**, this "popular outline" as Lenin subtitled it, was the presentation of "an exclusively theoretical, specifically economic analysis" of both the economic essence of the imperialist epoch as a whole and of the specific period of world imperialist economic development culminating in the First World War.

It has been precisely this, Lenin's conception of the economic essence of imperialism, along with the programmatic conclusions flowing from it, which have undergone attack, falsification, distortion and misrepresentation since the October 1917 revolution, not least at the hands of centrist tendencies of all shades claiming the 'Leninist' mantle since the end of the second world imperialist war.

Leon Trotsky, whose life and works embodied the continuity of revolutionary Marxism after Lenin's death, was forced throughout the 1920s and 1930s to defend Lenin's work against the epigones. In his criticism of the draft programme of the Communist International presented for its Sixth Congress, Trotsky opened with the following statement:

"The importance of a programme does not lie so much in the manner in which it formulates general theoretical conceptions (in the last analysis; this boils down to a question of 'codification', i.e. a concise exposition of the truths and generalisations which have been firmly and decisively acquired); it is to a much greater degree a question of drawing up the balance of the world economic and political experiences of the last period, particularly of the revolutionary struggles of the last five years - so rich in events and

mistakes... In our epoch which is the epoch of imperialism, i.e., of world economy and world politics under the hegemony of finance capital, not a single communist party can establish its programme by proceeding solely or mainly from conditions and tendencies of development in its own country."³

The re-elaboration of the Marxist international programme in this spirit is the aim of Workers Power. Difficulties reside in the fact that "drawing up the balance of the world economic and political experiences of the last period" signifies a theoretical understanding and analysis of the period of renewed imperialist crisis beginning in the early 1970s, a crisis which in turn grew out of a period of the so-called 'post-war boom' beginning in approximately 1948.

"General theoretical conceptions" concerning the imperialist epoch and its variegated periodic developments would indeed play no extensive role in our programmatic documents if it were only, as Trotsky suggests, a question of "codification"; but of what? Codification of "truths and generalisations which have been firmly and decisively acquired." Here is the crux of the problem.

CENTRIST CONFUSION

Many of the fundamental truths of Marxism have been unlearned. The process of centrist degeneration within revolutionary Marxism has left nothing untouched; not perspectives not programme, still less theory.

In particular, the centrist collapse of the Fourth International⁴ has created much confusion over the theory of imperialism. For example, the important relation and distinction between 'period' and 'epoch', of which Lenin speaks, was to result in an unending stream of confusion from the degenerate fragments of Trotskyism. Exemplary in this regard have been two inveterate centrist theoreticians. Ernest Mandel of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) with his tardy estimation of post Second World War imperialism in the expression "late capitalism" has created an extremely ambiguous concept which in his hands constantly slides back and forth between the idea of a post-imperialist epoch and that of a late imperialist period. More crudely revisionist was Michael Kidron of the British International Socialism group (IS - now the SWP) who in 1962 advanced the theory of "Imperialism, highest stage but one" going on to suggest that "Imperialism is still very real... (but) ... it is dying as reality and therefore as a useful concept."⁵

In the circumstances created by this situation nobody can claim to have "firmly and decisively acquired" the

"truths and generalisations" of Lenin's **Imperialism**. Rather, this is a goal we set ourselves. Here the re-elaboration of the Marxist programme requires as one of its premises the rediscovery of Lenin's theory as it really was. **Imperialism** itself must be excavated from beneath the mound of misrepresentations and falsifications under which many have, intentionally or otherwise, attempted to bury it.

But everything already said also leads us to the inescapable conclusion that we cannot simply rest content with a formal, "orthodox", uncritical restatement of Lenin's analysis in **Imperialism** if for no other reason than the simple fact that seven decades stand between us and that pamphlet. It is a truism to state that world imperialism has undergone gigantic modifications in that time, modifications which must of course find a place in our analysis.

REVOLUTIONARY RE-ELABORATION

In setting about the task of re-elaborating Lenin's theory of imperialism as a basis for the re-elaboration of the revolutionary programme we already possess a very important example of how to proceed. It is to be found in Trotsky's critical appraisal of the founding programmatic document of Marxism, the **Communist Manifesto**. Writing on the occasion of its ninetieth anniversary in 1937 Trotsky wrote:

"... the joint and rather brief production of two young authors continues to give irreplaceable directives upon the most important and burning questions of the struggle for emancipation. What other book could even distantly be compared with the **Communist Manifesto**? But this does not imply that after ninety years of unprecedented development of productive forces and vast social struggles, the **Manifesto** needs neither corrections nor additions. Revolutionary thought has nothing in common with idol-worship. Programmes and prognoses are tested and corrected in the light of experience, which is the supreme criterion of human reason. The **Manifesto**, too, requires corrections and additions. However, as evidenced by historical experience itself, these corrections and additions can be successfully made only by proceeding in accord with the method lodged in the foundation of the **Manifesto** itself."⁶

In similar vein we can unreservedly state that in the light of the experience of almost seven decades of unprecedented development of the productive forces and vast social struggles **Imperialism** has in all essentials stood the test of events. It thus forms an indispensable theoretical basis of the communist programme, it too continues to give irreplaceable directives upon the most burning questions of the struggle for emancipation. But this does not imply that **Imperialism**, any more than the **Communist Manifesto** before it, needs neither corrections nor additions; revolutionary thought has nothing in common with idol-worship. Our ultimate task is to make the necessary corrections and additions to **Imperialism**, with the proviso added by Trotsky in relation to the **Manifesto**, that this is done only by proceeding in accord with the method lodged in the foundation of **Imperialism**.

Before it is possible to examine in detail Lenin's 1916 work it is essential to trace the evolution of Lenin's understanding of Marxist political economy. This is so because a key problem of Marxist political economy is absent in any theoretically operative sense from Lenin's writings concerning the nature of his contemporary capitalism. This is the case from **The Development of Capitalism in Russia** (1899) to **Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism** (1916). It is one of the main objectives of this article concerning Lenin's theory of imperialism to accurately situate the law of the tendential fall in the rate

of profit, missing from the main course of Lenin's argument, in relation to his overall theoretical evolution. Marx described that law in the **Grundrisse**, as:

"in every respect the most important law of modern political economy, and the most essential for understanding the most difficult relations. It is the most important law from the historical standpoint."⁷

In fact this law played an entirely subordinate role in the theoretical discussion and debates surrounding the nature of the new epoch of capitalist development in the ranks of the Second International. In different ways Kautsky, Hilferding and Luxemburg, like Lenin, pushed this law into the background in their respective attempts to theoretically explain the decisive phenomena of the imperialist epoch.

The very law which Marx considered "the most important ... from the historical standpoint" because it expressed for him the most fundamental form of the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the relations of production under capitalism, was either mainly passed over in silence or revised in the Second International discussion. Paradoxically Lenin's theory of imperialism, which constituted both a contribution to the debate in the Second International and the theoretical foundation for the formation of the Third, put the greatest emphasis on the idea that imperialism represented the last, final, moribund and decadent stage of capitalist development, i.e. that stage in which the contradiction between the productive forces and capitalist property relations had reached bursting point. Yet Lenin's theory found no place for the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit. There are many reasons for this paradox; some of the most important from the theoretical standpoint are elucidated in this article.⁸

This article argues that a study of Lenin's work on political economy reveals a continuity of method linking the **Development of Capitalism in Russia** (1899) with the pamphlet on **Imperialism** seventeen years later. Lenin's theoretical adversaries during these years sought to give a one-sided explanation of capitalist evolution and crises. Some emphasised disproportionality between different sectors of production, others the under-consumption of the masses. Each in their own way endeavoured to demonstrate the possibility of a harmonious non-contradictory capitalist development.

Lenin himself in his contributions never integrated the key element in Marx's theory of crisis, namely, the tendential law of the falling rate of profit. Lenin had occasion to defend this law against its detractors but it never formed the axis of Lenin's own 'crisis theory'.

This is indeed a major weakness in Lenin's work. But this article will concentrate on first explaining **why** it did not come to occupy a central place in Lenin's thought. Secondly, it will demonstrate that despite this Lenin's contributions to the controversy within Russian Marxism and the Second International avoided all the pitfalls of his opponents in the sense that Lenin never lost sight of the fact - theoretically or politically - that capitalism in all its stages of development remains internally contradictory and crisis-racked, contradictions from which it could not escape. At the end of the day this helps explain **why Imperialism**, despite its weaknesses, represents a work of **revolutionary theory**, as compared to the apologias for imperialism that were to appear from his opportunist opponents.

The merits of Lenin's work reside in the analysis of the fusion of banking and industrial capital to form finance capital; the formation of monopoly capital and the tendency to ever greater exports of capital. Above all Lenin lays bare with stark simplicity

the antagonistic drive of imperialism to divide and re-divide the world in the bloody pursuit of profits.

Lenin's work of synthesis, a self-proclaimed 'popular outline', was also a scientific work which has essentially stood the test of time.

However, a detailed examination of Lenin's pamphlet and its strengths and weaknesses in relation to his political allies in the revolutionary left in the Second International (Bukharin, Luxemburg) will be left for a future article. Here, we concentrate on Lenin's positions in relation to what was essentially, or was to become, the centre and right-wing of the Second International. It begins with an examination of the debate within Russian Marxism in the 1890s and early 20th Century. It moves on to consider how Lenin's views informed his appreciation of the work of Rudolf Hilferding and Kautsky in the period 1910/11. It concludes with a re-statement of the key strengths of Lenin's 1916 pamphlet. These strengths related to Lenin's firm grasp of dialectical method and his consequent analysis of imperialism not as policy but as a contradictory, crisis-torn stage of capitalism, opening up an epoch of wars and revolutions.

THE DEBATE WITHIN RUSSIAN MARXISM

Writing in 1924 Nicolai Bukharin accurately, if somewhat schematically, summed up Lenin's theoretical position regarding the nature of capitalist crisis and his relation to rival theorists:

"If we separate off the most important points which concern us, we receive the following theoretical configuration: i. The apostles of harmony (Say and Co.) and the apologists: There is never a general over-production. ii. The Sismondists, Narodniks, Rosa Luxemburg: A general over-production must always be present. iii. The orthodox Marxists: A general over-production is sometimes unavoidable (periodic crises). Or in a different connexion: i. Tugan-Baranovsky, Hilferding et al.: Crises stem from the disproportion between the individual branches of production. The factor of consumption plays no role in this. ii. Marx, Lenin and the orthodox Marxists: Crises stem from the disproportion of social production. The factor of consumption, however, forms a component part of this disproportionality." (Bukharin's emphasis)⁹

During the 1890s when Russian Marxism was still for most practical purposes an ideological current Lenin found himself in effect in a bloc with the Legal Marxists - Struve, Bulgakov and Tugan-Baranovsky - against the Narodniks in the dispute over the development of capitalism. As the young Lenin developed his own definitive position, particularly by 1899 with the publication of his *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, he began to progressively discern the opportunist, revisionist and ultimately downright bourgeois liberal evolution of the Legal Marxists, and its reflection in their theoretical polemic with the Narodniks. Consequently Lenin began to define his own position against the political economy of first Tugan-Baranovsky and then Bulgakov with their disproportionality theory of crises.

Here it is necessary to expand on Bukharin's schema in order better to understand Lenin's theoretical evolution:

(a) The Narodniks attempted to utilise Marx's *Capital* to 'prove' that developing Russian capitalism destroyed its own home market by pauperising and proletarianising the peasant masses; and further that as Russian capitalism was belated and was thus confronted on the world market by already developed and dominant capitalist powers it could not hope to competitively attain a viable foreign market which, they argued, was the only conceivable replacement for the wither-

ing home market. There was thus according to the Narodniks, a permanent crisis of realisation; that is a permanent lack of markets for the development of capitalism in Russia. At its most abstract this meant an exclusive focus on the problems of the realisation of surplus-value and the problem of "under-consumption".

(b) The Legal Marxists claimed *Capital* for their own and hurled some of its major arguments back at the Narodniks. We mean here particularly Tugan-Baranovsky and Bulgakov. Tugan and Bulgakov more or less denied the reality of the problem raised by the Narodniks. They asserted that the proletarianisation of the masses, even involving impoverishment, signified a shift away from peasant natural economy, direct subsistence production and individual consumption within the peasant household.

In its place arose the purchase of the means of subsistence by wage labourers who, separated from the means of production, could not directly produce means of subsistence for themselves. Thus, proletarianisation involved a **growth** in the home market not its shrinkage. Further they developed the argument that the home market developed more because of demand for means of production than demand for means of consumption. Tugan ultimately pushed this latter argument so far that they concluded with the idea that capitalist production develops **completely** independently of the consuming power of capitalist society.

Finally, they argued that capitalism did not require a foreign market as the home market was completely sufficient, in theory at least, for the realisation of the capitalist commodity product. They therefore concluded that the only real cause of capitalist crises, of periodic breakdowns of capitalist realisations (markets), lay in the disproportions between the different branches of capitalist industry; the disproportions induced by the anarchic character of capitalist commodity production.

(c) It would be wrong to imagine that Lenin's position, as schematically outlined by Bukharin, was some kind of amalgam of the relevant correct ideas of the Narodniks and Legal Marxists. Rather Lenin was engaged in the hammering out of a more developed theoretical synthesis. Here his superior grasp and utilisation of the Marxist dialectical and materialist method proved decisive, although Lenin did not break with the theories advanced by Tugan and Bulgakov all at once.

Like both his Narodnik opponents and his wavering Marxist allies Lenin too turned to Marx's *Capital* as a guide to the maze of theoretical problems which demanded a scientific solution. Indeed Lenin's argument in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* was far more orthodox, in the positive sense, than the methods and theories propounded by the Narodniks and Legal Marxists. The theoretical section of his book is designed, among other things, to demonstrate Lenin's orthodoxy - his debt to all three volumes of *Capital*.

LENIN'S OBJECTIONS

At the very heart of Lenin's objections to the Narodnik and Legal Marxist conceptions of capitalist development in Russia was that both tendencies skated over Russian capitalism's concrete contradictions. In his book Lenin set out to illustrate the manifold contradictions of capitalist development.

On the one hand, the Narodniks denied the depth and social significance of capitalism's contradictions by

denying its very development. On the other hand, the Legal Marxists asserted capitalism's development in such a way as to remove the process of all significant contradictions.

Naturally, both tendencies ended by denying the revolutionary consequences which flowed from capitalism's inherent contradictions. Lenin's counter-position is best presented in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, in which he directed the following words against the Narodniks:

"Messrs V.V. and N.-on (Vorontsov and Danielson/Nikolaion, Narodnik theorists - WP) imagined that they were giving a profound appraisal of the contradictions of capitalism by pointing to the difficulties of realising surplus-value. Actually, however, they were giving an extremely superficial appraisal of the contradictions of capitalism, for if one speaks of the 'difficulties' of realisation, of the crises, etc., arising therefrom, one must admit that these 'difficulties' are not only possible but are necessary as regards all parts of the capitalist product, and not as regards surplus-value alone. Difficulties of this kind, due to disproportion in the distribution of the various branches of production, constantly arise, not only in realising surplus-value, but also in realising variable and constant capital; in realising not only the product consisting of articles of consumption, but also that consisting of means of production. Without 'difficulties' of this kind and crises, there cannot, in general, be any capitalist production, production by isolated producers for a world market unknown to them."¹⁰

The focus of Lenin's polemic in this book was the Narodniks. Elsewhere, Lenin directed these words against the Legal Marxist Tugan-Baranovsky in an article entitled *A Note on the Question of the Market Theory*:

"The consumer power of society' and the 'proportional relation of the various branches of production' - these are not conditions that are isolated, independent of, and unconnected with, each other. On the contrary, a definite condition of consumption is one of the elements of proportionality."¹¹

Against the Narodniks Lenin asserted that the contradictions in the whole process of the realisation of the capitalist commodity product are not restricted to the realisation of surplus-value or of those commodities destined for individual consumption but also encompass the disproportions between different branches of production, including those producing means of production - constant capital; against the Legal Marxists he asserted that the same contradictions are not restricted to disproportions between the individual branches of industry but also the 'disproportion' between capitalist production as a whole and the restricted social consumption arising on its basis.

INTERCONNECTION

In other words, basing himself on Marx's theory of realisation expounded in the second and third volumes of *Capital*, Lenin attempted to present a consistent theory of capitalist realisation with all of its contradictions in their interconnection, in opposition to the two one-sided theories of the Narodniks and the Legal Marxists. But just here we approach the limitations of Lenin's theoretical position both as it was developed in the period 1893 to 1900 and insofar as it was carried over into his conception of the imperialist epoch as elaborated in 1916.

The key to understanding these limitations lies in grasping what Lenin shared theoretically with the Legal Marxists in his early period. All three theoretical traditions passed under review here, including the Narodniks, focused on the realisation question, the question of the formation of a market for a capitalist mode of production

still in the process of formation. Whereas the Narodniks, turning their faces against reality, denied capitalism's development both Lenin and the Legal Marxists asserted it, and here the latter's shared focus on realisation expresses a certain common theoretical ground.

The major barriers to the development and growth of early capitalism in its classical period, as exemplified by the history of English capitalism, did indeed express themselves particularly acutely in the sphere of realisation, in the contradiction-ridden process of the formation of an adequate market for nascent capitalist industry. In that early period of capitalism the new productive forces were by no means in absolute contradiction with the new capitalist relations of production but rather with the old pre-capitalist, feudal and semi-feudal, relations of production.

In such conditions capitalism was faced with the necessity of separating the direct producers from the means of production, proletarianising them, thereby creating an adequate home market as well as the raw human material for capitalist exploitation. On the other hand, early capitalism was compelled to set about creating for the first time a really integrated world division of labour and thereby a world market for capitalist production.

Lenin's focus on the realisation problem can only be explained if it is understood that Lenin still saw Russian capitalist development, despite all of its peculiarities, as necessarily involving a repetition of the stages of development of classical capitalism. On this he and the Legal Marxists were in agreement.

All sides in this debate viewed the internal contradictions of Russian capitalism from the angle of the realisation problem (i.e. of markets) because they were studying a society wrestling with feudal survivals which were external to the newly developing capitalism.

The direct object of theoretical concern was not the manner in which the capitalistic development of the productive forces comes into contradiction with capitalist production relations but rather with that development's contradiction with the old feudal relations of production. What distinguishes Lenin from the Narodniks and Legal Marxists is the attempt, nonetheless, to grasp the depth and significance of capitalism's own internal contradictions in this concrete historical context. But by confining himself too rigidly to the realisation problem Lenin failed, as we shall see, to give a theoretically adequate, concrete estimation of capitalism's internal contradictions.

CAPITALISM'S CONTRADICTIONS

Of course *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* is not just concerned with the specifics of Russian capitalism's nascent development. The contradictions of capitalism in general are summarised by Lenin in the last chapter, in a section entitled 'The Mission of Capitalism'. There he states:

"The progressive historical role of capitalism may be summed up in two brief propositions: increase in the productive forces of social labour, and the socialisation of that labour."¹²

We can deal with Lenin's second point concerning the socialisation of labour first as it is fairly straightforward. Here he goes on to emphasise the historically progressive features of this capitalist socialisation but emphasising that this involved an ever "stronger . . . contradiction between this collective character of production and the individual (i.e. capitalist) character of appropriation."¹³ (12) Of more immediate significance is the manner in which Lenin deals with the capitalistic development of the productive forces underlying the socialisation of labour and its contradictions. Here Lenin argues in a manner most pertinent to the later development of his theory of imperialism:

"The development of the productive forces of social labour is to be observed in full relief only in the epoch of large-scale machine industry. Until the highest stage of capitalism was reached, there still remained hand production and primitive technique, which developed quite spontaneously and exceedingly slowly. The post-Reform epoch differs radically in this respect from previous epochs in Russian history. The Russia of the wooden plough and the flail, of the water-mill and the hand-loom, began rapidly to be transformed into the Russia of the iron plough and the threshing machine, of the steam-mill and the power-loom. An equally thorough transformation of technique is seen in every branch of the national economy where capitalist production predominates. This process of transformation must, by the very nature of capitalism, take place in the midst of much that is uneven and

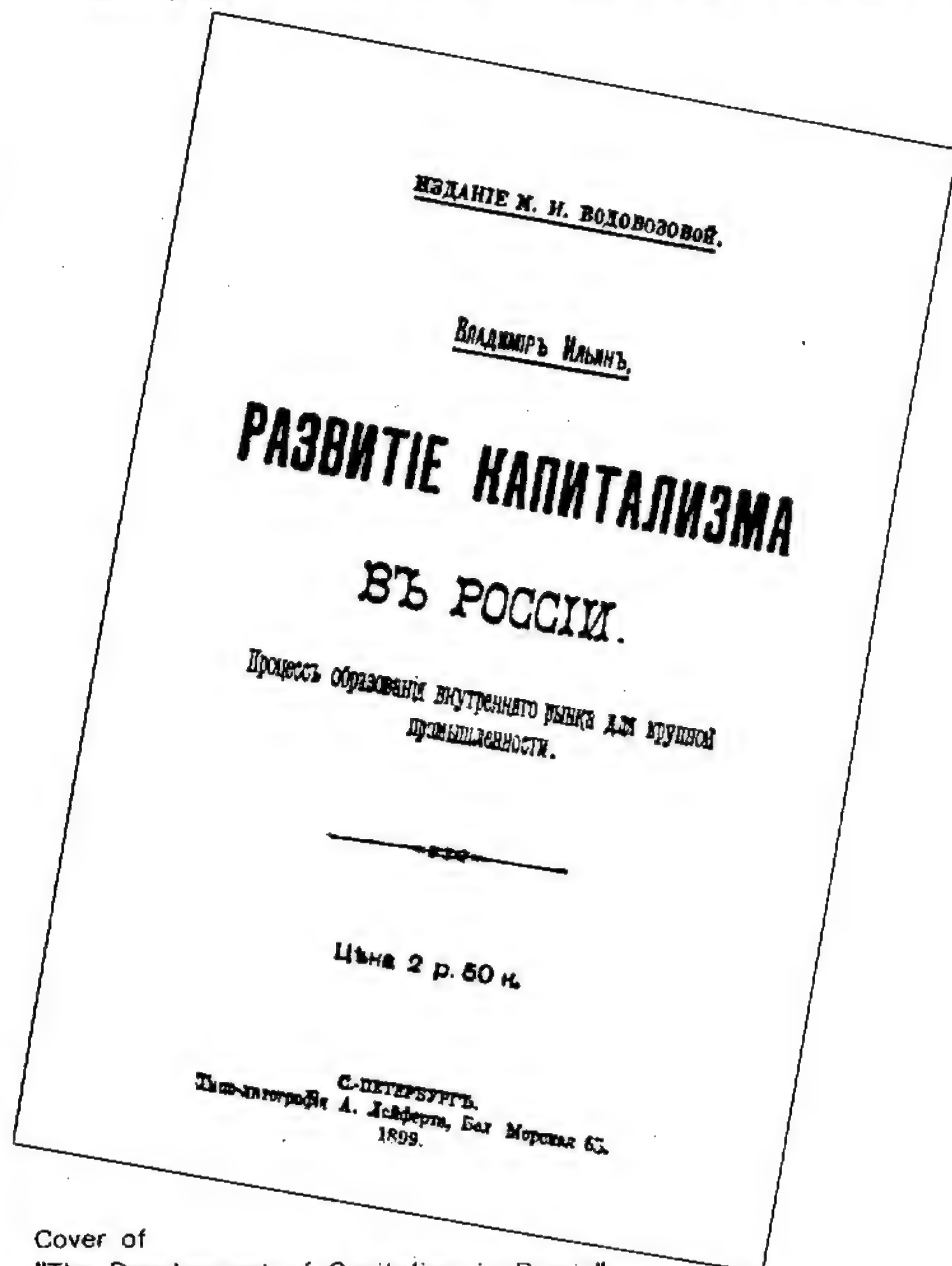
large-scale machine production" constituted the "highest stage of capitalism". The *Development of Capitalism in Russia* is subtitled 'The Process of the Formation of a Home Market for Large-Scale Industry'. The majority of the book is devoted to a strictly factual demonstration of the actual development of capitalism in Russian agriculture and industry. Here Lenin utilises the categories developed by Marx in *Capital*, e.g. small peasant or handicraft, industry, domestic industry and manufacture, culminating in the development of large-scale machine industry. Thus Lenin quite explicitly sets out to show that Russian capitalism was passing through, albeit in abbreviated and combined forms, essentially the same stages of development as classical capitalism, exemplified in England.

We therefore arrive at a double conclusion: for Lenin in 1899, and considerably beyond, the development of capitalism in Russia necessarily had to culminate in the wide-scale development of large-scale industry, and just this constituted the "highest stage of capitalism". Yet large-scale machine industry as conceived by Marx in *Capital* was only the specific "mode of production" appropriate to capitalism in the epoch of free competition which reaches its classical form in England in the middle of the 19th Century. In this way, in Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, the epoch of free competition effectively becomes the "highest stage of capitalism". Lenin was to correct this view both in relation to Russian and world capitalism in *Imperialism*.

This early conception was due to the actual stage of development of capitalism itself. He wrote the manuscript of his 'markets', as he used to call it for short, during the years 1895 to 1898 in relation to a very backward country, i.e. in the very first years of the opening imperialist epoch; not until 1909 was Hilferding's *Finance Capital*, subtitled the 'latest phase of capitalist development' written. Under the influence of that book, together with the debate on the nature of imperialism in the ranks of the Second International, Lenin was to re-consider his position. This was given decisive impetus by the double catastrophe of the first world imperialist war and the Second International's capitulation to it. In 1916, Lenin revised his own estimation of the highest stage of capitalism in *Imperialism*. Summing up his conclusions in the latter work, in relation to capitalism in general, he argues:

"Imperialism emerged as the development and direct continuation of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism in general. But capitalism only became capitalist imperialism at a definite and very high stage of its development, when certain of its fundamental characteristics began to change into their opposites, when the features of the epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves in all spheres. Economically, the main thing in this process is the displacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopoly. Free competition is the basic feature of capitalism, and of commodity production generally; monopoly is the exact opposite of free competition, but we have seen the latter being transformed into monopoly before our eyes, creating large-scale industry, and carrying concentration of production and capital to the point where out of it has grown and is growing monopoly: cartels, syndicates and trusts, and merging with them, the capital of a dozen or so banks, which manipulate thousands and millions. At the same time the monopolies, which have grown out of free competition, do not eliminate the latter, but exist above it and alongside it, and thereby give rise to a number of acute, intense antagonisms, frictions and conflicts. Monopoly is the transition from capitalism to a higher system.

If it is necessary to give the briefest definition of imperialism we should have to say that imperialism



Cover of
"The Development of Capitalism in Russia"

disproportionate: periods of prosperity alternate with periods of crisis, the development of one industry leads to the decline of another, there is progress in one aspect of agriculture in one area and in another aspect in another area, the growth of trade and industry outstrips the growth of agriculture, etc. A large number of errors made by Narodnik writers spring from their efforts to prove that this disproportionate, spasmodic, feverish development is not development. Another feature of the development by capitalism of the social productive forces is that the growth of the means of production (productive consumption) outstrips by far the growth of personal consumption: we have indicated on more than one occasion how this is manifested in agriculture and in industry. This feature springs from the general laws of the realisation of the product in capitalist society, and fully conforms to the antagonistic nature of this society."¹⁴

What are the vital components to Lenin's argument here? First of all, we find the argument that the "epoch of

is the monopoly stage of capitalism."¹⁵

Here Lenin clearly states that the transition from the free competition to the imperialist, monopoly, stage of capitalism is at root a quantitative development in the process of the concentration of production and capital which leads to a qualitative revolution in the nature of large-scale industry itself which thereby takes on the capitalist form of the monopoly, which he now considered the 'highest stage of capitalism'.

THEORETICAL CONTINUITY

In this first point regarding the theoretical limitations of his conception of the highest stage of capitalism in his *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* we have established the axis of the theoretical changes between Lenin's two epoch-making theoretical works published in 1899 and 1916 respectively. In the two following points regarding the passage above from the earlier work we can see, by contrast, the spheres of basic methodological and theoretical continuity between 1899 and 1916.

First we come to Lenin's argument, in that passage, that "capitalism" by its "very nature" develops in an "uneven and disproportionate" manner. The whole posing of the question of crises, industrial development alongside industrial decline, the uneven development of industry and agriculture is in all essentials identical to corresponding arguments in *Imperialism*. In the 1890's Lenin already definitely advanced his theory of the uneven development of capitalism which was later to be so characteristic of and important to his analysis of imperialism.

Secondly, having dealt with Lenin's argument that the capitalistic development of the productive forces inevitably leads to unevenness, periodic crises and disproportions in general we come to his last point concerning the economic forms of that unevenness. He argues in the passage from *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* that the capitalistic development of the productive forces leads to the growth of the means of production "outstripping" the growth of personal consumption.

Lenin has this to say on the antagonistic nature of capitalism in the first theoretical chapter of his 1899 work:

"The development of production (and, consequently, of the home market) chiefly on account of means of production seems paradoxical and undoubtedly constitutes a contradiction. It is real 'production as an end in itself' - the expansion of production without a corresponding expansion of consumption. But it is a contradiction not of doctrine, but of actual life; it is the sort of contradiction of this system of social economy. It is this expansion of production without a corresponding expansion of consumption that corresponds to the historical mission of capitalism and to its specific social structure; the latter rules out the utilisation of these technical achievements by the mass of the population. There is an undoubted contradiction between the drive towards the unlimited expansion of production inherent in capitalism, and the limited consumption of the masses of the people (limited because of their proletarian status)."¹⁶

Lenin refers here to the conflict between the capitalist drive to simultaneously expand the productive forces and restrict the individual consumption of the proletariat - the mass of the population - to the means of subsistence necessary to produce and reproduce the commodity labour-power. This is a necessary restriction because it is the indispensable basis of the performance of surplus unpaid labour which produces surplus-value for capital. Clearly this conflict, this disproportion is nothing but an expression of the contradiction between the capitalist development of the productive forces and capitalist relations of production. Lenin concludes:

"These propositions all speak of the contradiction

we have mentioned, namely the contradiction between the unrestricted drive to expand production and limited consumption - and of nothing else. Nothing could be more senseless than to conclude from these passages in Capital that Marx did not admit the possibility of surplus-value being realised in capitalist society, that he attributed crises to under-consumption, and so forth."¹⁷

Here he attacks the Narodniks' under-consumptionist theory. He states, in effect, that under-consumption, in the above explained sense, is a necessarily permanent feature of capitalist society while crises, as breakdowns in the process of realisation, are precisely temporary, periodic. To put it another way, the permanent contradiction between the growth of capitalist production and the limited consumption of the proletariat does not prevent the periodic realisation of the entire capitalist product. It is just this theoretical possibility which forms a condition of Marx's schemas of reproduction in Volume 2 of *Capital*.

Lenin concludes this part of his polemic with the Narodniks by situating the place of his under-consumption of the masses in the final breakdown of developed capitalism due to its own internal contradictions:

"The contradiction between the drive towards the unlimited expansion of production and limited consumption is not the only contradiction of capitalism, which cannot exist and develop at all without contradictions. The contradictions of capitalism testify to its historically transient character, and make clear the conditions and causes of its collapse and transformation into a higher form, but they by no means rule out either the possibility of capitalism, or its progressive character as compared with preceding systems of social economy."¹⁸

Hence Lenin rejects the under-consumptionist theory of the Narodniks on the same methodological basis, and on the basis of the same theory of capitalist realisation, as he rejected the disproportionality theory of the Legal Marxists. But here we reach the very limits of Lenin's theory of capitalist crises, which is restricted to a theory of realisation, however consistent, dialectical and materialist.

While attempting to develop an 'orthodox' Marxist theoretical synthesis Lenin could not completely escape the orbit of either an under-consumptionist or a disproportionality theory just because he remained on the plane of realisation, and on that theoretical plane it is impossible to transcend these theories completely.

This weakness with *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* has two closely related consequences. They concern the limitation of Lenin's critique of Adam Smith and Lenin's grasp of the changing organic composition of capital. Adam Smith's error, corrected by Marx, lay in his idea that the price of the total product of capitalist society is ultimately resolvable into variable capital plus surplus-value, to use Marx's categories, or into wages plus profits plus rent, to use Smith's. Marx established that the total value of the capitalist product ultimately resolves itself into constant capital plus variable capital plus surplus value.

Smith fell into hopeless contradictions when he attempted an analysis of the total process of circulation of the capitalist product, of capitalist realisation, just because he could find no place for the circulation of constant capital within this total process which comprises an essential moment in the process of capitalist reproduction. This means that Smith had no place in his theory for the circulation of the means of production, the product of Department 1. Lenin confines himself completely to a criticism of Smith on the plane of realisation and the derivative question of income and revenue.

In the same chapter Lenin - following the practice of the Legal Marxists - introduces a changing organic composition of capital into Marx's schemes of reproduction.

In other words Lenin introduces into the schemes the changing relation between c and v , wherein c grows relative to v which is nothing but the expression in value terms of the capitalist development of the productive forces. This then becomes the basis of his argument concerning the manner in which Department 1, producing means of production, grows relative to Department 2, which produces articles of consumption. This disproportion between the two major departments of social production is then the expression of the development of the productive forces on the one hand and the relative restriction of the consumption of the proletariat on the other.

Lenin injected a changing organic composition of capital into his analysis to demonstrate how and why capitalism's home market developed more on account of demand for means of production than on account of demand for means of consumption. Thus he dealt with the changing organic composition of capital exclusively from the angle of the realisation problem. (i.e. from the perspective of markets).

Now it must be said that such an approach is not alien to Marx. In particular, he did criticise Smith's error extensively from the angle of the realisation problem. Nonetheless, Lenin's **exclusive** focus on the realisation problem in relation to both Smith's errors and the theoretical significance of the changing organic composition of capital does exclude the treatment of what Marx considered the **root theoretical problem** associated with this complex of questions, namely, the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

LENIN'S OVERSIGHT

In explaining this tendential law, Marx never introduced a changing organic composition of capital into his schemes of reproduction as he developed them in Volume 2 of **Capital**, as both the Legal Marxists and Lenin did. This does not mean that because Marx did not do it anywhere in his writings that it is therefore altogether theoretically illegitimate. For Marx never completed **Capital**, and the introduction of a changing organic composition of capital into the schemes would indeed appear to follow naturally from Marx's whole method of exposition in the three volumes of **Capital**.

But it is illegitimate to simply introduce a changing organic composition into the schemes as elaborated by Marx in Volume 2. Marx did not and for a very good reason. The schemes in Volume 2 have as their sole theoretical concern the **circulation** process of the total social capital, and in this sense the **realisation** of the whole capitalist commodity product through exchange between and within the two great departments of social production. It is inconceivable that Marx would even have considered introducing new schemes of reproduction including a changing organic composition of capital, and thus necessarily changing relations between Departments 1 and 2, until **after** his analysis of the effects of the changing organic composition of capital in the process of **valorization** of the total social capital (i.e. the **production** of surplus value as distinct from its **realisation**). This is just the object of the chapters in Volume 3 of **Capital** dealing with the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit.

It is this relation between capital's organic composition and its process of valorisation which Lenin skips over by straightaway introducing a changing organic composition into Marx's schemes as theoretically established in Volume 2, thereby viewing this question purely from the angle of realisation, of circulation. For the same reason Lenin focuses, in **The Development of Capitalism in Russia**, as we have seen, in relation to capitalism in general and its 'highest stage', on the contradiction between the development of capitalist production and the restricted consumption of the labouring masses.

Although this latter contradiction is real, as Marx himself emphasises a number of times in the pages of **Capital**, nonetheless it is far from the only one. Indeed it is not the most fundamental expression of the contradiction between the capitalist development of the productive forces and capitalist relations of production. Marx outlines what this is in chapter 15 of Volume 3 of **Capital** which deals with the contradictions of the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit:

"... in view of the fact that the rate at which the total capital is valorized, i.e. the rate of profit, is the spur to capitalist production (in the same way as the valorization of capital is its sole purpose), a fall in this rate slows down the formation of new, independent capitals and thus appears as a threat to the development of the capitalist production process; it promotes overproduction, speculation and crises, and leads to the existence of excess capital alongside a surplus population. Thus economists like Ricardo, who take the capitalist mode of production as an absolute, feel here that this mode of production creates a barrier for itself and seek the source of this barrier not in production but rather in nature (in the theory of rent). The important thing in their horror at the falling rate of profit is the feeling that the capitalist mode of production comes up against a barrier to the development of the productive forces which has nothing to do with the production of wealth as such; but this characteristic barrier in fact testifies to the restrictiveness and the solely historical and transitory character of the capitalist mode of production; it bears witness that this is not an absolute mode of production for the production of wealth but actually comes into conflict at a certain stage with the latter's further development."¹⁹

Here Marx clarifies the importance of the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit both as a driving force in capitalism's periodic crises and through these as a motor of capitalism's final demise. It is this law which Lenin overlooks in his brief reference to the 'highest stage of capitalism' in **The Development of Capitalism in Russia**. Nor does he correct this theoretical oversight in his revised conception of **Imperialism**.

Despite his revision, correction and addition to the conception of the highest stage of capitalism presented in the latter work, Lenin still remains on the same basic theoretical terrain established in **The Development of Capitalism in Russia**. Yet his theoretical oversight has less far-reaching consequences for the analysis in Lenin's earlier work than for that in **Imperialism** because of the different aims and objects of the two studies. In the one he sets out to analyse developing capitalism in a backward pre-capitalist milieu. In the other, he investigates what he fully recognises is the epoch of the most technically advanced capitalism, an epoch in which capitalist industry has left far behind the level of technique analysed by Marx under the category of "large-scale machine industry".

It is just this technical development within capitalist production which necessarily expresses itself in a rising organic composition of capital and the tendential fall in the rate of profit. The rising organic composition of capital is nothing but an expression in value terms of a rising technical composition of capital - a growth in the scale of the objects and instruments of labour relative to the quantity of labour-power the capitalist has to purchase to set those instruments and objects in motion in the labour process.

Thus the rising organic composition is an index, peculiar to capitalism, of the increasing social productivity of labour. The law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit is the most basic specifically capitalist form of appearance of the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the relations of production. It is thus a particularly important law for the

scientific understanding of capitalism in its highest stage.

TUGAN VERSUS MARX AND LENIN

Lenin was, of course, aware of Marx's treatment of this law. Indeed, between 1899 and 1916 we have evidence of this in his writings. In 1899 Tugan-Baranovsky had published an article entitled *The Fundamental Mistake in Marx's theory of Capitalism* in which he for the first time came out unambiguously as a Russian adherent of the revisionist school. In advancing a harmonist, in essence apologetic, disproportionality theory of crisis which suggested to him the idea that there 'exists no absolute economic barriers to capitalism's development, no inherent contradiction between the capitalistic development of the productive forces and capitalism's social relations, Tugan was eventually constrained to attack head on what he considered to be Marx's 'under-consumptionist' theory of crisis presented in various places in *Capital*. But he also attacked Marx's *Capital* for advancing what he considered to be the quite separate theory of crisis based on the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit. Here he approached Marx's supposed "fundamental mistake".

Tugan argued that Marx's law as advanced in Volume 3 of *Capital* was based on an obviously anomalous assumption: namely, that Marx while introducing a growth of constant capital relative to variable capital, (i.e. a rise in the organic composition of capital) nevertheless assumed a constant rate of surplus-value, (i.e. a constant rate of exploitation of labour). This assumption, argued Tugan, is patently absurd because if it is made the rate of profit must indeed fall but this ignores the fact that the rise in the organic composition of capital necessarily signifies a growth in the productivity of labour.

On this basis Tugan then proceeded to make a really false assumption all of his own. He argued that the rising rate of surplus value, a rate measured relative to variable capital alone (s/v), can always theoretically offset the rate of growth of the capital's organic composition and can thus always theoretically offset any tendency for the rate of profit to fall, the rate of profit being surplus-value measured relative to variable capital ($s/c+v$). Thus he quipped that Marx's 'law' might just as well have been termed the law of the tendential rise in the rate of profit.

This argument concerning Marx's supposed false assumption was in fact first advanced by Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz and has been repeated hundreds of times since by bourgeois economists and also by many 'Marxists'. However, Marx made no such assumption in his theoretical elaboration of the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit in the third volume of *Capital*. The notion that he did flows, as is usual in these cases, from a complete misunderstanding of his method of exposition.

Marx, of course, was fully aware that the rising organic composition of capital necessarily, in general, involved a rise in the rate of surplus-value and thus, potentially in the rate of profit also. This fact was fully integrated into the very basis of his theory of the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit. He considered that the rise in the rate of surplus-value consequent upon a rise in the organic composition of capital was indeed the chief reason why individual capitalists introduce new technology in the hope of boosting their rate of profit. For Marx, therefore, the rising organic composition of capital is the basis for two opposite movements in the rate of profit. It is simultaneously the basis for both raising and reducing the rate of profit. Thus Marx's theory is here, as everywhere, both concrete and dialectical in its very fundamentals.

So much for Marx's 'false assumption'. Now we arrive at Tugan's. If Marx had really been guilty of this false assumption with which he was charged then he would have straightforwardly formulated an absolute law of the falling rate of profit, instead he formulated it as a "tendential law" precisely because he integrated at its very foundations certain "counter-acting factors". The very first of these factors as analysed in Chapter 14 of the third volume devoted to them is . . . the rise in the rate of surplus-value, the rise in the rate of exploitation. Therein, in relation to a rising rate of surplus-value, Marx argues:

"It does not annul the general law. But it has the effect that this law operates more as a tendency, i.e. as a law whose absolute realization is held up, delayed and weakened by counteracting factors. However, as the same factors that increase the rate of surplus-value (and the extension of the working day is itself a result of large-scale industry) tend to reduce the amount of labour-power employed by a given capital, the same factors tend both to reduce the rate of profit and slow down the movement in this direction."²⁰

Whereas Tugan assumed that there was no reason in theory why the rise in the rate of surplus-value may not indefinitely outweigh any tendency for the rate of profit to fall Marx was always quite clear that a general rise in the rate of profit due to a general rise in the rate of surplus-value can only in the long run constitute a counteracting factor to the "general law" of a falling profit rate because the very rise in the organic composition of capital which is the basis of the rise in the rate of surplus-value must ultimately lead to a fall in the rate of profit.

Tugan could only make his false assumption because he treated the rising organic composition of capital and the rising rate of surplus-value in a formalistic, one-sidedly abstract, manner. In effect he treated c , v and s as "pure" mathematical quantities. Thus it was extremely simple for him to attribute an arbitrary figure to s designed to arithmetically compensate for any change assumed in the quantitative relations between c and v in order to ensure that $1(s/c+v)$ is not greater than $2(s/v+c)$, i.e. that there is no fall in the rate of profit in relation to these arbitrarily selected numerical examples.

This method of simple arithmetical abstraction, which he repeats in its essentials in relation to his treatment of Marx's schemes of reproduction, ignores one tiny little fact: the concepts expressed in the notational form $c+v+s$ are a value expression of the decisive elements of capitalist production in its historic specificity, viz. the objects and instruments of labour as capital (c), the value of the commodity labour-power i.e. of its means of subsistence which therefore constitutes the value expression of necessary labour (v), and surplus labour in the form of surplus-value (s). For that reason the mutual quantitative relations between c , v and s cannot therefore be arbitrarily selected and then arbitrarily altered in their individual components because they are concretely interdependent variables. It was precisely the real material inter-relationships between c , v and s and their dialectical development which Marx expressed in the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit.

LENIN'S ORTHODOX DEFENCE

Lenin read Tugan's article concerning Marx's "fundamental mistake" in the middle of 1899. His immediate response was contained in a few explosive lines in two letters written in June of that year. In the first he wrote:

"I have seen Nauchnoye Obozreniye No. 5 and find that Tugan-Baranovsky's article in it is monstrously foolish and nonsensical: he has simply arbitrarily introduced changes into the rate of surplus-value in order to 'refute' Marx: he assumes an absurdity - a change in the productivity of labour without a change in the value of the product. I don't know whether every such nonsensical article is worth writing about. Let him first fulfill his promise to develop it in detail".²¹



Cover of "Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism"

And in the second:

"Regarding the 'sensational discoveries' of the Russian disciples and their Neo-Kantianism", I am becoming more and more indignant. I have read Tugan-Baranovsky's article in No. 5 of Nauchnoye Obozreniye . . . What utterly stupid and pretentious nonsense! Without any historical study of Marx's doctrine, without any new researches, on the basis of schematic errors (arbitrary alteration of the norm of surplus-value), on the basis of elevating to a general rule an exceptional case (raising the productivity of labour without decreasing the value of the product: an absurdity if this is taken as a general phenomenon) - on the basis of this to talk about a 'new theory', about Marx's mistake, about reconstruction . . . No I cannot believe your statement that Tugan-Baranovsky is becoming more and more a Genosse. Mikhailovsky was right in calling him an 'echo man' . . ."²²

Thus in mid-1899, more or less contemporary with the publication of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Lenin defended the theoretical basis of Marx's exposition of the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit in an orthodox fashion. However, in later articles and reviews for publication in which Tugan's theoretical views were criticised Lenin focused on Tugan's claim that Marx advanced an under-consumptionist theory and the latter's

supposed contradiction with the Baranovskyite interpretation of the rest of Marx's doctrine. Lenin replied in a vein with which we are already familiar. He denied that Marx advanced an under-consumptionist theory of crisis but asserted the significance of the contradiction between capitalist production and social consumption.

Fifteen years later, during the course of 1914, Lenin wrote an article: *Karl Marx - A Brief Biographical Sketch with an exposition of Marxism*, for the Russian encyclopedia *Granat*. The article contained a brief section entitled 'Marx's Economic Doctrine' in which Lenin brilliantly summarises the argument of all three volumes of *Capital*. The focus and emphasis of his precis are completely in conformity with his detailed views on *Capital* as expressed in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*.

Thus he states in 1914:

"A rise in the productivity of labour implies a more rapid growth of constant capital as compared with variable capital. Inasmuch as surplus value is a function of variable capital alone, it is obvious that the rate of profit (the ratio of surplus value to the whole capital, not to its variable part alone) tends to fall. Marx makes a detailed analysis of this tendency and of a number of circumstances that conceal it or counteract it".²³

The emphasis given to the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit in Lenin's whole treatment of the third volume is revealing. For this passage comprises the entirety of his comments on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. But it is immediately preceded by a whole page concerning the question of the formation of an average rate of profit involving the formation of prices of production, the so-called 'transformation problem'. And it is immediately followed by three pages concerning Marx's revolutionary new theory of ground rent expounded in the third volume. The law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit is effectively squeezed in Lenin's precis of that volume between these two major focuses.

The first focus, the transformation problem, reflects the influence and importance for Lenin of the theoretical development of the Second International as a whole. The major theoreticians of the International were constrained to defend *Capital*, and in particular the third volume published in 1894, from its direct bourgeois detractors, the theoreticians of marginal utility, spear-headed by the Austrian Bohm-Bawerk with his book *Karl Marx and the Close of his System*.

Hilferding provided the 'orthodox' reply in 1904 with his *Bohm-Bawerk's Criticism of Marx*, a very methodologically and theoretically flawed work. The bourgeois marginal utility theory found a ready response in the ranks of the revisionists within the International. Indeed, the theoreticians of Russian Legal Marxism to a man declared themselves adherents of the marginal utility theory of value against Marx's labour theory in the early 1900s.

The second focus, on Marx's theory of ground rent, is determined rather by the fact that Lenin was writing for a Russian encyclopedia. Again and again from the late 1890's Lenin emphasised the revolutionary significance of the theoretical understanding of capitalist ground rent as elaborated by Marx in *Capital* Volume Three in the context of the development of capitalism in Russian agriculture alongside all the out-lived, feudal remnants which gave such a decisive place to the agrarian question in the Russian revolution.

The limitations of Lenin's position lie in the fact that his very brief orthodox defence and exposition of Marx's theory always remained just that; he never applied and developed anew the theory of the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit, although his whole theoretical course of development, his whole striving towards a higher theoretical synthesis, point in the direction of just such a renewed application and development.

TOWARDS A THEORY OF IMPERIALISM

To get a better grasp of Lenin's attempt to achieve a theoretical synthesis it is essential to review Lenin's response to the theoretical contributions of Hilferding and Kautsky on the subject of capitalist development.

The background to these works and to an understanding of Lenin's response to them, is to be found at the turn of the century and the debate within German and Austrian Social-Democracy. While the theoretical dispute between the 'orthodox' Marxists led by their 'Pope' Karl Kautsky, and the revisionist trend, spearheaded by Eduard Bernstein in the late 1890s, had profound reverberations and repercussions within the ranks of Russian Marxism, the debate between the latter and the Narodniks had, in its turn, far-reaching effects on the avowedly anti-revisionist theoreticians within German and Austrian Social-Democracy.

KARL KAUTSKY'S REVISIONIST EVOLUTION

Kautsky challenged Bernstein's apologetic arguments that capitalist crises were being progressively ameliorated, that the conditions of the working class generally and potentially limitlessly improved, and that Marx's 'breakdown theory' of capitalist economic collapse was nonsense. In the years 1899-1900, Kautsky developed his own theory of progressively worsening capitalist crises which must lead eventually to the replacement of capitalism with socialism.

But Kautsky's theory only received its fullest and most lengthy elaboration in a critical review of Tugan-Baranovsky's book *Theory and History of Commercial Crises in England* published in *Neue Zeit* in 1902. In that review Kautsky quite explicitly advanced an 'under-consumptionist' theory as Marxist theoretical 'orthodoxy'. Thus he directed the following against the theoretical basis of Tugan's disproportionality theory:

"If that were true, the greater its capital wealth is, the faster England's industry would have to grow. But instead, it is coming to a standstill, capital is emigrating to Russia, South Africa, China, Japan and so on. This phenomenon is explained by our theory, according to which under-consumption is the ultimate cause of crises; it is incomprehensible from Tugan-Baranovsky's point of view . . . Although capitalists increase their wealth and the number of exploited workers grows, they cannot themselves form a sufficient market for capitalist-produced commodities, as accumulation of capital and productivity grow even faster. They must find a market in those states and nations which are still non-capitalist. They find this market, and expand it, but still not fast enough, since this additional market hardly has the flexibility and ability to expand the capitalist process of production. Once capitalist production has developed large-scale industry, as was already the case in England in the nineteenth century, it has the possibility of expanding by leaps and bounds that soon overtakes any expansion of the market. Thus, any prosperity which results from a substantial expansion in the market is doomed from the beginning to a short life, and will necessarily end in a crisis.

This is the theory of crisis, which as far as we can see, is generally accepted by 'orthodox' Marxists and was set up by Marx".²⁴

It was disproportionality theories such as Tugan's which Kautsky considered the very essence of 'theoretical revisionism'. Thus he was led to pose the split between orthodoxy and revisionism in the theoretical form of a split between under-consumptionists and disproportionality theories:

"What practical importance . . . do our theoretical differences have? Whether crises are caused by un-

stable proportions in social production or by under-consumption - is that anything more than an academic question? That is what many 'practical' men might think. But in fact the question is of great practical importance, especially for tactical differences which are being discussed in our party. It is no mere accident that revisionism attacks Marx's theory of crises with particular vigour."²⁵

It is obvious from these passages from Kautsky's review that he had developed a theory of crises in the years 1899-1902 quite different from that advanced by Lenin in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* published in 1899. In contrast to Kautsky, Lenin emphasised that Marx's theory could by no means be characterised as under-consumptionist. Nor, therefore, did Lenin counterpose disproportionality to the conflict between the development of capitalist production and social consumption but rather considered the latter an element of the former.

Kautsky's theory that neither the capitalists nor the workers can form an adequate market for capitalist production is closer to that of the Narodniks than to Lenin's opposition. But Kautsky developed his theory of a realisation problem in relation to already industrially developed capitalist nations while the Narodniks confined it to a backward country faced with nascent capitalist development.²⁶

By 1914 Kautsky was to advance an explicit disproportionality theory. This testified to the truth of Lenin's view that there was never a real gulf between under-consumptionism and disproportionality. For in 1914, in his famous article entitled *Ultra-Imperialism*, Kautsky is to be discovered advancing a definite disproportionality theory which forms the harmonist and the apologetic theoretical foundation of both the theory of imperialism and ultra-imperialism advanced there. The very opening passage of the article runs:

"We have seen that the undisturbed advance of the process of production presupposes that the different branches of production all produce in the correct proportion. Yet it is also evident that within the capitalist mode of production there is a constant drive towards the violation of this proportion, because within a specific zone the capitalist mode of production tends to develop much more quickly in the industrial than in the agricultural sector. On the one hand, this is an important reason for the periodic crises which constantly grip the industrial sector, and which thereby restore the correct proportion between the different branches of production. On the other hand, the growing ability of capitalist industry to expand constantly increases the pressure to extend the agricultural zone that provides industry not only with foodstuffs and raw materials, but also with customers. Since the importance of the agrarian zones to industry is a dual one, the disproportion between industry and agriculture may also be expressed in two ways. Firstly, the outlets for industrial products in the agrarian zones may not grow so fast as industrial production; this appears as overproduction. Secondly, agriculture may not provide the quantities of foodstuffs and raw materials needed for the rapid growth of industrial production; this takes the form of dearth . . . One of the two phenomena, dearth or overproduction, may easily pass over into the other, because they both derive from the disproportion in question. An increase in prices always foreshadows the beginning of a crisis, although this emerges as over-production and brings with it a price collapse.

On the other hand the constant drive of the industrialised capitalist countries to extend the agricultural zones involved in trade relations with them, takes the most varied forms. Given that this drive is one of the very conditions of the existence of capitalism, it is still far from proven that any one

of these forms is an indispensable necessity for the capitalist mode of production".²⁷

This passage constitutes nothing more than a recasting, in terms of disproportionality, of the theory which Kautsky advanced against Tugan-Baranovsky under the sign of under-consumption in 1902. In both 1902 and 1914 there is a disproportional relation between the rapid productive development of capitalist industry in the advanced capitalist nations and the ability of the backward non-capitalist nations and sector, or what is but the same thing, the agrarian zones, to absorb capitalist industry's surplus commodity product. In both cases this disproportion forms the basis of crises of over-production in capitalist industry, in other words crises are associated exclusively with an insufficient market, that is crises of realisation.

We find in *Ultra-Imperialism*, a definition of imperialism as a relation between advanced industrial capitalist nations and backward agrarian zones or nations. We also find in this passage from *Ultra-Imperialism* the basis of Kautsky's theory of imperialism as "policy" rather than as a phase or stage of capitalist development. This theory suffered at Lenin's hands in *Imperialism*. At the end of the passage, Kautsky makes it clear that he understands that the relation between capitalist industry and agrarian zones is one common to capitalism in general, to capitalism in all its historic phases, that it "is one of the very conditions of existence of capitalism". It then becomes extremely straightforward to characterise "free trade" and "imperialism" as different "forms", different capitalist policies arising on a common economic foundation. Given the harmonist connotations of the disproportionality theory there remains only one step to the theory of the "next phase" of capitalist development, "ultra-imperialism" which is in fact a conception of a peaceful, harmonious, contradiction-free capitalism which has returned to the epoch of free trade and free competition, on a higher plane.

HILFERDING'S FINANCE CAPITAL

Yet Kautsky's passage from theoretical 'orthodoxy' to 'theoretical revisionism' as he cast it himself in 1902 did not take place overnight. Kautsky began the open theoretical transition from his original under-consumptionist to the disproportionality position in the years 1909/10, the very years when he began his back-sliding from the leftward impulse imparted to him by the Russian Revolution of 1905. A rightward turn in his overall political evolution thereby coincided with the publication of Rudolf Hilferding's *Finance Capital*. In his review of *Finance Capital* published in the course of 1910 in the pages of *Neue Zeit* Kautsky announced the death in battle of 'theoretical revisionism'.

"Theoretical - though not practical - revisionism has been defeated, and we Marxists can devote all our energy and time, as far as we can devote these to the theoretical side, to the great task of building up and adapting to recent times the structure which our masters left behind in uncompleted form. And, in truth, during recent years no one can any longer complain of the unfruitfulness of Marxism. Among the new creations of Marxist literature - indeed, among any of the literature - one of the most remarkable phenomena is the book written by Hilferding on finance capital. In a sense it may be called a continuation of Marx's Capital."²⁸

In his review Kautsky criticised *Finance Capital* on only one theoretical point, Hilferding's false theory of money. However, Kautsky completely failed to mention the complementary theoretical error in *Finance Capital* when Hilferding advanced Tugan-Baranovsky's 'theoretical revisionist' theory of crises quite contrary to that theory advanced by Kautsky in 1902 as "generally accepted by

orthodox Marxists". Referring to Marx's schemas of reproduction Hilferding commented:

"Tugan-Baranovsky deserves credit for calling attention to the significance of these investigations for the problem of crises in his Theory of Commercial Crises in England. The curious thing is that this needed to be pointed out at all."²⁹

And this was the very book Kautsky savaged in 1902!

In the following passage from *Finance Capital* we find Hilferding advancing Tugan's theory of disproportionality:

"This schematic presentation (i.e. Marx's schemas of reproduction) is, of course, greatly simplified. Clearly the proportional relations between the capital goods and the consumer goods industries as a whole must also prevail in each separate branch of production. These schemes also show, however, that in capitalist production both simple and expanded reproduction can proceed without interruption as long as these proportions are maintained. Conversely a crisis can occur even in the case of simple reproduction if the proportions are violated, for example that between depreciated capital and capital ready for new investment. It does not follow at all, therefore, that a crisis in capitalist production is caused by the under-consumption of the masses which is inherent in it. A crisis could just as well be brought about by a too rapid expansion of consumption, or by a state of declining production of capital goods. Nor does it follow from these schemes in themselves that a general over-production of commodities is possible; but rather that any expansion of production allowed by the available productive forces appears possible".
30

Kautsky states regarding Hilferding's theory of crises:

"There is only one point that I would like to go into more fully - namely, the theory of crises. Not because I differ from Hilferding here; on the contrary, I regard his remarks on this question among the best and most fruitful of his book; but because they have inspired me most, and have drawn out opinions of my own which perhaps, to a certain extent, serve to complete those of Hilferding."³¹

This 'completion' of Hilferding turns out to be a surreptitious attempt to first slip back in the very element of crisis theory which Hilferding denies, under-consumption, and secondly to provide an extended analysis of the disproportion between capitalist industry and agriculture, an analysis which completely prefigures the theory presented in his article *Ultra Imperialism* of 1914.

LENIN'S CRITICAL WELCOME

Nevertheless, when *Finance Capital* appeared Lenin himself gave it a critical but generally positive review. Even after the break with the Second International in 1914 Lenin continued to recommend Hilferding's contribution.

We must note here that Lenin nowhere provides any lengthy, specifically methodological and theoretical, critique of *Finance Capital*'s errors in the field of political economy. This is partly explained by the nature of *Imperialism* as a 'popular outline' differing from a book like *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* which devoted a whole chapter to purely theoretical polemic. However in Lenin's *Notebooks on Imperialism* we do find certain elements of such a critique of Hilferding, elements which, in the context of Lenin's whole theoretical and political evolution, none the less serve to clearly demonstrate a general form of criticism with which we are already familiar.

He criticises Hilferding in *Finance Capital* as a Kantian³², as an opponent of the Marxist materialist and dialectical method, in the context of the former's mistaken theory of the money commodity. Further he notes

Imperialism

with apparent incredulity Hilferding's reference to the supposed 'merit' of Tugan-Baranovsky³³ in relation to the theoretical understanding of crises, a reference to which we have already referred.

Yet for all that Lenin broadly welcomed Hilferding's work. Indeed, in *Imperialism*, Lenin goes so far as to bracket Finance Capital with his own work:

"In 1910, there appeared in Vienna the work of the Austrian Marxist, Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital* . . . In spite of the mistake the author makes on the theory of money, and spite of a certain inclination on his part to reconcile Marxism with opportunism, this work gives a very valuable theoretical analysis of the 'latest phase of capitalist development', as the subtitle runs".³⁴

In the closest connection with Hilferding's "inclination" to adapt Marxism to opportunism, Lenin emphasises elsewhere in *Imperialism* Hilferding's effective denial of a particularly important feature of finance capital, of imperialism:

"One of the shortcomings of the Marxist Hilferding is that on this point he has taken a step backward compared with the non-Marxist Hobson. I refer to parasitism, which is characteristic of imperialism."³⁵

In his *Notebooks on Imperialism*, compiled in 1915 and the first half of 1916, Lenin lists what he considered to be all of the shortcomings of Finance Capital:

"Hilferding's shortcomings:

1. Theoretical error concerning money.
2. Ignores (almost) the division of the world.
3. Ignores the relationship between finance capital and parasitism.
4. Ignores the relationship between imperialism and opportunism."³⁶

Theoretically, it was just because he ignored, indeed effectively denied, the parasitic features of imperialism that Hilferding was led to ignore the relation between imperialism and opportunism. In the Preface to the French and German editions of *Imperialism* written in 1920 Lenin was able to draw out more clearly than in his pamphlet, written with tsarist censorship in mind, the political implications of Hilferding's theoretical error in relation to imperialist parasitism:

"A few words must be said about Chapter VIII, 'Parasitism and Decay of Capitalism'. As already pointed out in the text, Hilferding, ex-Marxist, and now a comrade in arms of Kautsky and one of the chief exponents of bourgeois, reformist policy in the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, has taken a step backward on this question compared with the frankly pacifist and reformist Englishman,

Hobson. The international split of the entire working class movement is now quite evident (the Second and Third Internationals). The fact that armed struggle and civil war is now raging between the two trends is also quite evident . . . What is the economic basis of this world historic phenomenon?

It is precisely the parasitism and decay of capitalism, characteristic of its highest stage of development, i.e. imperialism . . .

Unless the economic roots of this phenomenon are understood and its social and political significance is appreciated, not a step can be taken toward the solution of the practical problems of the communist movement and of the impending social revolution.

Imperialism is the eve of the social revolution of the proletariat. This has been confirmed since 1917 on a world scale".³⁷

There can be no doubt that the errors in method and theory which can be discovered both in Hilferding's theory of money, pointed out and criticised by Kautsky, and in his harmonist disproportionality theory of crises, pointed out and criticised by Luxemburg, are symmetrical and complementary, existing at different stages of his argument. This conception has roots in his undialectical - in essence Ricardian rather than Marxist - understanding of the labour theory of value as outlined in his book *Bohm-Bawerk's Criticism of Marx*.

In the latter work and *Finance Capital*, taken together, Hilferding advances the elements of a conception of commodity exchange, the circulation of commodities in general, and of the circulation of the total capitalist commodity product in particular, in which he consistently misunderstands and downplays the internal contradiction of the realisation process: contradictions which are rooted in the internal contradictions of the commodity itself. Hence his advocacy of a disproportionality theory with overtones very similar to the general conception of the Legal Marxist Tugan-Baranovsky.

From the disproportionality theory it was an easy step to the argument, presented in *Finance Capital*, that the growth of banking and industrial monopolies, i.e. of 'finance capital', moderates rather than exacerbates monetary and credit crises. Hence in relation to the banks he argues:

"The absence of a monetary crisis protects credit against a complete breakdown and is therefore also a safeguard against the occurrence of a bank crisis. There is no run on the banks and mass withdrawal of deposits, and the banks, if they are otherwise solvent, can meet their obligations . . .

The concentration of banking plays an important part here. Through the enormous expansion of the



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sphere of business activity, and its extension to diverse national economic areas at different stages of capitalist development, it allows a much greater spreading of risk . . .

The above mentioned facts throw light on the causes which have changed the character of crises in so far as the latter result from large scale bankruptcies and from stock exchange, bank, credit and money panics. While these causes do not preclude the occurrence of crises, they do explain why it is more difficult for them to occur . . . But all these factors leave unresolved the emergence of an industrial crisis, the cyclical alternation of prosperity and depression. The question arises whether the great change in the form of industrial organisation, whether monopolies, through their alleged power to suspend the regulatory action of the capitalist mechanism - free competition - can bring about the qualitative changes in the business cycle?"³⁸

Hilferding had, in fact, already answered this question before he asked it, specifically in relation to the circulation of commodities:

"The large modern firm has quite a different relation to a crisis. Its output is so large that some part of it can continue even during a crisis. . . Along with the concentration of firms the scale on which production can be maintained also increases.

As capitalist production develops there is therefore an increase, both relative and absolute, in that part of production which can be carried on under all circumstances, and along with it an increase in the volume of commodity circulation which continues undisturbed during the crisis, and of the circulation of credit based upon it. Hence the disruption of credit need not be as complete as in the crises of the early period of capitalism. Furthermore, the development of a credit crisis into a banking crisis on one side and a monetary crisis on the other is made more difficult, first by the changes in the organisation of credit and second by that shift in the relation between commerce and industry."³⁹

Hilferding goes on to argue on this basis that the whole finance capitalist phase or epoch is characterised if not by the abolition of capitalist anarchy and crises then at least by their progressive amelioration. He has laid the foundation for denying the intrinsically parasitic, 'coupon-clipping' as Lenin calls it, character of finance capital. For here he asserts the general amelioration of those periodically arising spurs to the waves of parasitic speculation endemic to capitalism. He therefore sees speculation as a phenomenon of the free competition rather than the finance capitalist stage of capitalism:

"The mass psychoses which speculation generated at the beginning of the capitalist era in those blessed times when every speculator felt like a god who creates a world out of nothing, seem to be gone forever."⁴⁰

LENIN'S DIFFERENCES WITH HILFERDING

In *Imperialism* Lenin presents a quite different assessment of the relation between the basic economic phenomena of the imperialist epoch and the development of the severity of capitalist crises:

"The statement that cartels can abolish crises is a fable spread by bourgeois economists who at all cost desire to place capitalism in a favourable light. On the contrary, the monopoly created in certain branches of industry increases and intensifies the anarchy inherent in capitalist production as a whole. The disparity between the development of agriculture and that of industry, which is characteristic of capitalism in general, is increased. The privileged position of the most highly cartelised, so-called heavy industry, es-

pecially coal and iron, causes 'a still greater lack of co-ordination' in other branches of industry - as Heideis, the author of one of the best works on the 'relationship of the German big banks to industry,' admits, 'The more developed an economic system is,' writes Liefmann, an unblushing apologist of capitalism, 'the more it resorts to risky enterprises, or enterprises in other countries, to those which need a great deal of time to develop, or finally to those which are only of local importance.' The increased risk is connected in the long run with a prodigious increase of capital, which, as it were, overflows the brim, flows abroad, etc. At the same time the extremely rapid rate of technical progress gives rise to increasing elements of disparity between the various spheres of national economy, to anarchy and crises. Liefmann is obliged to admit that, 'In all probability mankind will see further important technical revolutions in the near future which will also affect the organisation of the economic system' . . . electricity and aviation . . .' As a general rule, in such periods of radical economic change, speculation develops on a large scale."⁴¹

Here Lenin completely inverts Hilferding's conception of the general historic development of capitalist crises. But he does this within the framework of a basic disproportion, "anarchy" and "disparity", theory of crisis; in essence the same conception he advanced in the period 1893 to 1899 against the Narodniks. Further, it is in this passage that Lenin for the first time in *Imperialism* connects this theory of crisis with the existence of a surplus of capital in the imperialist countries which flows abroad, which is exported.

However there remains a theoretical aspect of Finance Capital to which Lenin makes no reference in either the *Notebooks* or *Imperialism*, and to which in the latter work he advances a quite different theory. We refer to the theoretical basis of Hilferding's conception of the export of capital as a characteristic feature of the finance capitalist phase of development.

We have established that in relation to the sphere of realisation, of capitalistically produced values, including surplus-value, Hilferding advanced in *Finance Capital* a disproportionality theory of crisis in which he denied any significant role to the under-consumption of the masses characteristic of capitalism. Curiously enough, however, when he turned to an assessment not of capital's process of realisation but its process of valorization - the process of the capitalist production of value and surplus-value rather than its circulation - he advanced a completely different theory of crises based on the changing organic composition of capital:

"A crisis involves a slump in sales. In capitalist society this presupposes a cessation of new capital investment, which in turn presupposes a fall in the rate of profit. This decline in the rate of profit is entailed by the change in the organic composition of capital, which has taken place as a result of the investment of new capital. A crisis is simply the point at which the rate of profit begins to fall."⁴²

But this brief orthodox restatement of Marx's analysis of the internal dynamic of capital's valorization process testifies more to Hilferding's theoretical eclecticism than anything else. Nowhere in *Finance Capital* does he establish an integral theory of capitalist crises which consistently encompasses both capital's process of valorization and realisation, essential moments of the expanded reproduction of the total social capital. He cannot. His theory of realisation points to the possibility of the unbounded development of the productive forces and capitalist relations of production. For Marx, labour is the sole driving force of capital's valorization and the production of surplus-value while the growing organic composition of capital represents the growing role of machinery which increasingly reduces the role of direct labour. The

marginalisation of living labour, the sole source of surplus value, is at the root of the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit. Marx expressed this idea in the *Grundrisse*:

"Labour no longer appears so much to be included within the production process: rather, the human being comes to relate more as watchman and regulator to the production process itself . . . He steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor. In this transformation it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body - it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth. The theft of alien labour time, on which the present wealth is based appears a miserable foundation in face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself." (Marx's emphasis)⁴³

Despite his references to the changing organic composition of capital and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall Hilferding evinces a remarkable lack of interest in the development of the labour process along with its internal contradictions in his magnum opus. This contrasts with Lenin who, despite the fact that he makes no reference to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, emphasises again and again in his popular outline, *Imperialism*, both the "amazing technical progress" characteristic of capitalism's monopoly stage and the fact that monopoly represents a brake and impediment to technical and economic change. Lenin sees this contradictory development as the root of the growing contradiction between the socialisation of capitalist production and the retention of private appropriation characteristic of the imperialist epoch.

There remains, however, one theoretical use to which Hilferding does put the uneven development of the organic composition of capital in world economy in the finance capitalist phase:

"The precondition for the export of capital is the variation in rates of profit, and the export of capital is the means of equalising national rates of profit. The level of profit depends upon the organic composition of capital, that is to say, upon the degree of capitalist development. The more advanced it is the lower will be the average rate of profit."⁴⁴

He fails to significantly develop this idea, which without doubt he attained from Marx's chapters concerning the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit in Volume three of *Capital*. Indeed in the bald form presented here it remains an extremely one-sided and wooden abstraction. Yet it is also true that the uneven development of world capitalist economy expresses itself in different average national organic compositions of capital and thus in differential rates of profit. This tendency manifests itself in the periodic changes in the general conditions of capital accumulation (the alternation of prosperity and depression, the longer periods of "boom" and stagnation in world economy), and provides an indispensable theoretical key to unravelling the uneven and periodic flows of capital exports in the imperialist epoch.⁴⁵

LENIN ON IMPERIALISM

The object of this article is not to develop such a theoretical analysis in concrete detail but to demonstrate that it is just this indispensable theoretical component which is absent from Lenin's *Imperialism*. Hence he gives a distinctly different explanation to the drive to export capital in the imperialist epoch to that provided, at least in embryo, in *Finance Capital*. Thus Lenin argues;

"in the threshold of the twentieth century we see

the formation of a new type of monopoly, firstly, monopolistic associations of capitalists in all capitalistically developed countries; secondly, the monopolist position of a few very rich countries in which the accumulation of capital has reached gigantic proportions. An enormous 'surplus of capital' has arisen in the advanced countries.

It goes without saying that if capitalism could develop agriculture, which today is everywhere lagging terribly behind industry, if it could raise the living standards of the masses, who in spite of the amazing technical progress are everywhere still half-starved and poverty stricken, there could be no question of a surplus of capital. This 'argument' is very often advanced by the petit-bourgeois critics of capitalism. But if capitalism did these things it would not be capitalism; for both uneven development and a semi-starvation level of existence of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and constitute premisses of this mode of production. As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will be utilised not for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decline in profits for the capitalists, but for the purpose of increasing profits by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. In these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap. The export of capital is made possible by a number of backward countries having already been drawn into world capitalist intercourse; main railways have either been or are being built in those countries, elementary conditions for industrial development have been created, etc. The need to export capital arises from the fact that in a few countries capitalism has become 'overripe' and (owing to the backward state of agriculture and the poverty of the masses) capital cannot find a field for 'profitable' investment."⁴⁶

This is a theoretical explanation of the existence of surplus capital in the advanced capitalist countries, a surplus relative to profitability which therefore must be exported in order to extract a surplus or "super" profit over and above the average rate of profit in the home country. Thus Lenin deals with basically the same phenomena which Hilferding attempted to explain via the development of the organic composition of capital. Lenin's explanation is based exclusively on the fact that "both uneven development and a semi-starvation level of existence of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and constitute premisses of this mode of production."⁴⁷

True as this statement is, it is not clear that it provides an adequate theoretical explanation of the phenomena under discussion. Further, this explanation is nothing other than a strict repetition of the theory presented in detail in 1899 in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* of the inevitable disproportionality which includes within it the disproportion between capitalist production and society's consuming power based on the inevitable restriction of the consumption of the masses under capitalism. The difference is that in 1899 this theory was applied to early capitalist development in Russia while in 1916 it is applied to world capitalism in its highest stage. Here we arrive at that point in *Imperialism* which requires both an "addition" and a "correction" on the plane of theoretical political economy.

In fact the picture of world capitalist economy in *Imperialism* is a theory of the internal developments in the six major imperialist powers (Britain, France, Germany, the USA, Russia and Japan) and their mutual relations with each other and the rest of the world, predominantly backward and imperialised. In this context there is no systematic analysis in Lenin's

popular outline of the internal capitalist development of the imperialised countries in the imperialist epoch beyond a few comments such as:

"The export of capital influences and greatly accelerates the development of capitalism in those countries to which it is exported. While, therefore, the export of capital may tend to a certain extent to arrest development in the capital-exporting countries, it can only do so by expanding and deepening the further development of capitalism throughout the world."⁴⁸

As Lenin gives considerable emphasis to the export of capital to the backward and imperialised countries his meaning here is clear. Thus he argues:

"Capitalism is growing with the greatest rapidity in the colonies and in overseas countries. Among the latter, new imperialist powers are emerging (e.g. Japan)."⁴⁹

A theory of the imperialist epoch as a whole requires an analysis not only of the internal evolution of the imperialist but also of the imperialised nations. The export of capital is a prime link between the two. This too is a required "addition" to Lenin's *Imperialism*, one of no small scope, it might be added.⁵⁰



Lenin in 1916

In *Imperialism* Lenin stresses the role of foreign, in particular French and German, bank capital as the basis of his contention that, "Owing to the formation of capitalist monopolies, the merging of bank and industrial capital has also made enormous strides in Russia"⁵¹ i.e. in the formation of Russian finance capital. The export of capital from advanced countries to backward countries, viewed from the angle of the "backward" country, in this case Russia, Hilferding in *Finance Capital* naturally enough termed the "import of capital".

It is just an assessment of the role and significance of the import of foreign capital into Russia in the

1890s which is missing from *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. This cannot be explained by the absence of the phenomena on a large scale in that period. Rather it is to be explained by Lenin's theoretical object in that book and the manner in which he approaches it.

In the preface to the first edition of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* Lenin states both the aim of his study and what is in fact one of its major limitations.

"It seemed to us that it was necessary to examine the whole process of the development of capitalism in Russia, to endeavour to depict it in its entirety. It goes without saying that such an extensive task would be beyond the powers of a single person, were a number of limitations not introduced. Firstly, as the title itself shows, we treat the problem of the development of capitalism in Russia exclusively from the standpoint of the home market, leaving aside the problem of the foreign market and data on foreign trade."⁵²

In the penultimate section of the last chapter of the book, a section entitled "The Significance of the border regions. Home or foreign market?", he deals with the significance of Russia's "internal" colonies. He returns there to the "limitation" of the book:

"What is important is that capitalism cannot exist and develop without constantly expanding the sphere of its domination, without colonising new countries and drawing old non-capitalist countries into the whirlpool of world economy. And this feature of capitalism has been and continues to be manifested with tremendous force in post-reform Russia.

Hence, the process of the formation of a market for capitalism has two aspects, namely, the development of capitalism in depth, i.e. the further growth of capitalist agriculture and industry in the given, definite and enclosed territory - and the development of capitalism in breadth, i.e. the extension of the sphere of the capitalist domination to new territory. In accordance with the plan of the present work, we have confined ourselves almost exclusively to the first aspect of the process, and for this reason we consider it particularly necessary to stress the point here that its other aspect is of exceptionally great importance. Anything like a complete study of the process of colonisation of the border regions and of the expansion of Russian territory, from the point of view of capitalist development, would require a special work. Suffice it to mention here that Russia is in a particularly favoured position as compared with other capitalist countries, due to the abundance of free land accessible for colonisation in its border regions."⁵³

In *Imperialism* Lenin shows Russian imperialism to be second only to Britain in the possession of colonies as measured both by area and population. If it was not for the tsarist censor he would undoubtedly have emphasised this aspect of Russia's imperialist development. This question is marginalised by the whole manner of Lenin's treatment of his subject in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*.

Further, despite the recognition in this passage of the importance of Russia's relation to world economy it remains tantamount to an admission of what is a fact: that Lenin's book approaches its subject almost exclusively from the point of view of capitalism's indigenous, internal evolution. This leads to the danger of a certain theoretical elision - the confusion of the development of capitalism in Russia with the development of Russian capitalism. These two things are by no means either theoretically or historically

identical. The latter presupposes the development of a Russian bourgeoisie rooted economically and socially in the Russian national soil, the former in as much as it involved imported foreign capital does not, or at least not necessarily.

In his preface to the second edition of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1907) Lenin weighs up the importance of the book in the light of the experience of the Revolution of 1905:

"The analysis of the social-economic system and, consequently, of the class structure of Russia given in this work on the basis of an economic investigation and critical analysis of statistics, has now been confirmed by the open political action of all classes in the course of the revolution. The leading role of the proletariat has been fully revealed. It has also been revealed that the strength of the proletariat in the process of history is immeasurably greater than its share of the total population. The economic basis of the one phenomenon and the other is demonstrated in the present work."⁵⁴

But Lenin had excluded from consideration in his earlier book the economic basis of the dis-proportionate growth in the social importance of the Russian proletariat as compared with the Russian bourgeoisie - the import of West European capital.

Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism thus represented an advance on his earlier work and yet still failed to transcend the theoretical limits of his earlier book. Its merit, its revolutionary significance, and its burning relevance, resides in its powerful proof that monopoly capitalism tends to exacerbate rather than ameliorate capitalist crises. His work was not a 'popular synthesis' of other people's ideas - as his bourgeois or petit-bourgeois detractors claim. Lenin transcended the one-sidedness of his opponents in the Second International. What he took from Marx, above all, was the latter's dialectical approach to the question of political economy.

Lenin's economic definition does not require fundamental correction or addition, and this is true in so far as it refers to the imperialist epoch as a whole. But for Lenin writing in 1916 there could be no question of the concrete analysis of different periods of development in world imperialist economics and politics because at that time the first period of the imperialist epoch was the epoch by definition. Things look different to us of course, and at the root of the periodic development of imperialism we must situate the changing long periods of imperialism economic development.

Of course, this objective historical context does not on its own explain why **Imperialism** even in the form of a "popular outline", does not deal with the periodic movements of capitalist economy in the epoch of imperialism in either the form of the long economic periods of capital accumulation or the shorter periodic cyclical motion. That lies in what Lenin inherited, assimilated and raised to a new height from the theoretical tradition painstakingly established by the Second International in the long period of capitalist "prosperity" from 1895 to the "eve of the First World War".

This obviously requires some rather significant "additions" on our part. Seventy years on we have the responsibility of correcting Lenin's **Imperialism** in the light of the development and application of the theory of capitalist crises and tendency towards economic breakdown found in Marx's *Capital*, and especially in the third volume, to the imperialist epoch. We have in mind here the laws of profit rate movement as established by Marx on the basis of the changing technical and organic composition of capital. Such a development and application of Marx's most important scientific discovery in the field of political economy is long overdue.

The development of the organic composition of capital and the resulting movements in profit rates are also the key to a rounded understanding of the course of capital export and thus of the whole uneven development of world capitalist economy in the imperialist epoch.

The development of a theory of international and national capitalist crises, of capitalist economic contradictions, in the imperialist epoch will in turn provide a sure foundation for a closer understanding of the decadent and parasitic character of the monopoly stage of capitalism.

One thing, however, should by now be clear. Lenin remained true to the same dialectical method from the earliest days of his theoretical disputes with Russian Narodism and Legal Marxism through to the theoretical works of his political maturity - **Imperialism** and *The State and Revolution* and beyond - polemically directed, in particular against Kautskyanism. It is this common method which shines through all of his arguments concerning disproportionalities, under-consumption and uneven development in general. It was his dialectical understanding of the contradictions of capitalist economy which must inevitably sharpen and lead ultimately to its historic demise which gave the whole of Lenin's thought its profoundly revolutionary cast. Any theoretical correction of Lenin's **Imperialism** must obviously proceed on the basis of this, his, method.

1. V I Lenin 'Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism' in *Collected Works (CW)* Lawrence and Wishart. vol 22 p188
2. *Ibid.* p189
3. L Trotsky. *The Third International After Lenin* Pathfinder (New York) 1970 pp3-4
4. see *The Death Agony of the Fourth International Workers Power*, Irish Workers Group (London-Dublin) 1983. This book charts the degeneration of Trotsky's Fourth International after the Second World War and outlines the tasks of Trotskyists today.
5. M Kidron 'International Capitalism' in the collection *Capitalism and Theory* which also contains the article 'Imperialism: Highest Stage But One' Pluto Press 1974
6. L Trotsky. *Writings 1937-38* Pathfinder (New York) 1970 pp21-22
7. K Mark. *Grundrisse* Penguin 1973 p748

8. The law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit did not suffer a happier fate in the Third International, even in its brief revolutionary period embracing its first four world congresses. In that first period there was already a certain tendency to treat Lenin's pronouncements on theoretical questions as a new "orthodoxy". On the other hand the only serious challenge within the International to Lenin's theory of imperialism came from the adherents of the martyred Rosa Luxemburg's conception developed prior to the First World War. While Lenin failed to concretely apply, and in that sense develop anew for new conditions, the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit Luxemburg's particular focus on capitalism's realisation problem (markets) led her and her epigones to deny the law itself in a manner reminiscent of the revisionists' conception.

There were attempts made to integrate the law into an understanding of imperialism by two individuals whose positions should be regarded as growing out

- of the counter-revolutionary degeneration of the Third International. One such attempt was made by Paul Mattick who left the Third International on an ultra-left trajectory in its early years and who was to come to identify Leninism with Stalinism. The law of the tendency of the rate of profit was as much a stick with which to beat Lenin as anything else in his hands. (**Marx and Keynes** Merlin Press 1974) Another such attempt was made within the ranks of Stalinism itself by its leading economic historian Maurice Dobb, granted a little theoretical licence esconced in academia in Britain. (**Political Economy and Capitalism** Routledge and Kegan Paul 1937) These two examples should serve to illustrate the fact that Marx's law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit is not in itself some talisman of orthodoxy. It is in the first place a question of the correct method and an understanding of the place of this law within Marx's whole critique of political economy.
9. **N Bukharin. Imperialism and the Accumulation of Capital** Monthly Review (New York and London) 1972 p225
 10. **V I Lenin** The Development of Capitalism in Russia **CW** vol 3 p47
 11. **V I Lenin** A Note on the Question of the Market Theory **CW** vol 4 pp58-9
 12. **V I Lenin** The Development . . . op.cit. p595
 13. Ibid. p597
 14. Ibid. pp595-6
 15. **V I Lenin** Imperialism: op.cit. pp231-2
 16. **V I Lenin**. The Development . . . op.cit. p56
 17. Ibid. p58
 18. Ibid. pp349-50
 18. **K Marx**. Capital Volume 3. Penguin 1981 pp349-50
 20. Ibid. pp341-2
 21. **V I Lenin** Letter to his Mother and Brother **CW** vol 37 p267
 22. **V I Lenin** Letter to A N Potresov **CW** vol 34 p39
 23. **V I Lenin** Karl Marx - a Brief Biographical Sketch **CW** vol 21 pp66-7
 24. quoted in **R Luxemburg. The Accumulation of Capital; An Anti-Critique** Monthly Review Press 1972 p79
 25. Ibid. p80
 26. Further, Kautsky's theory of the relation between advanced capitalist nations like England which had developed large-scale industry and which must sell its surplus of internally unsaleable commodities to non-capitalist strata and nations is the direct theoretical antecedent of Rosa Luxemburg's theory of imperialism advanced a decade later in her **Accumulation**.
 27. **K Kautsky. Ultra-Imperialism** (1914) Reproduced in **New Left Review** No.59 Jan-Feb 1970 pp41-42
 28. **K Kautsky** Finance Capital and Crises. Neue Zeit XXIX Bd.1 1910-11.p. As cited in **P M Sweezy The Theory of Capitalist Development** Monthly Review Press 1970 p202
 29. **R Hilferding. Finance Capital** Routledge & Kegan Paul 1981 p420
 30. Ibid. p256
 31. **K Kautsky** Finance Capital . . . op.cit.
 32. **V I Lenin** Notebook on Imperialism **CW** vol 39 p334
 33. Ibid. p336
 34. **V I Lenin** Imperialism: op.cit. p176
 35. Ibid. p240
 36. **V I Lenin**. Notebook . . . op.cit. p202
 37. **V I Lenin** Imperialism: op.cit. pp193-4
 38. **R Hilferding** op.cit. p291 and p296
 39. Ibid. p290
 40. Ibid.
 41. **V I Lenin** Imperialism: op.cit. pp208-9
 42. **R Hilferding** op.cit. p257
 43. **K Marx**. Grundrisse op.cit. p705
 44. **R Hilferding** op.cit. p257
 45. It is noticeable that both Lenin's and Hilferding's view, at least at the most abstract theoretical level, of the export of capital assumes it flows from the advanced to the more backward countries. These explanations both seem to theoretically exclude an explanation of capital exports from one imperialist nation to another, especially where the exporting nation is the more capitalistically backward of the two. Such phenomena can be integrated with Lenin's whole theory of imperialism with the aid of the theoretical understanding of the lawfully determined movement of international profit rates, although not on the basis of Hilferding's one-sided understanding of the same. Here we are primarily concerned with Lenin's conception of the significance of the export of capital from the advanced imperialist nations to backward and imperialised nations.
 46. **V I Lenin** Imperialism: op.cit. pp212-213
 47. Ibid. p171
 48. Ibid. p214
 49. Ibid. p239
 50. The idea naturally springs to mind here that Lenin's extended analysis of the development of capitalism in backward Russia in 1899, on the eve of the imperialist epoch, provides as it were, a "supplement" to **Imperialism** in relation to many of the problems raised in analysing the development of capitalism in the backward imperialised nations in the imperialist epoch. This idea is certainly correct if **The Development of Capitalism in Russia** is approached with a critical sense of historical perspective.
 51. **V I Lenin** Imperialism: op.cit. p205
 52. **V I Lenin** The Development . . . op.cit. p25
 53. Ibid. pp593-4
 54. Ibid. p31

Permanent Revolution and South Africa

APARTHEID & SOUTH AFRICAN IMPERIALISM

1. South Africa began the 20th century as a colony of British imperialism. To-day it exists as a minor imperialist power in its own right. Not only was British imperialism forced to concede to this development due to its own weakness after two world wars, but it co-operated in the transference of capital ownership and the provision of investment to allow this development to take place. In return, South Africa promotes the regional interests of Anglo-American imperialism as well as extending its own interests.

The position of South Africa as the producer of major strategically important mineral wealth and the retention of huge investments, means that British and American imperialisms are determined to retain South Africa as a junior partner in an imperialist alliance dominating Southern Africa.

2. The Apartheid State combines imperialist democracy for the immensely privileged white minority with a brutal dictatorship over the black majority. Systematic racism was the only 'justification' possible for keeping the black masses as 'colonial slaves' of the whites. Military and police repression are the only means of maintaining it. The Apartheid system grew naturally out of the conditions of a racist settler state seeking to deny self-determination, independence or indeed even the most basic political and civil rights to the blacks. That racist state owed its historic development to the need of British imperialist mining capital for the supply and maximum exploitation of black labour. As a result the blacks were denied any ownership of land and cattle. In order to develop the process of proletarianisation black farmers were deprived of their traditional forms of proprietorship and forced to work as wage slaves.

While we recognise that the black masses suffer political oppression akin to that of colonial domination, we reject the 'internal colonialisation' theses as argued by African nationalists and

the South African Communist Party. We do so in particular for two reasons:

(a) it contains the false argument that South Africa consists of 'separate nations' (i.e. a 'black' and a 'white' nation). This concedes to the Afrikaner and English-speaking whites the idea that separate nationhood (i.e. partition of the South African state) could be advanced as a political solution to the present crisis.

(b) it falsely ties the ending of the blacks' colonial status to a separate, democratic stage in the revolutionary process.

3. The nature of the Apartheid State, as a qualitative development of the racist colonial state can only be understood as the outcome of a reactionary alliance between the Afrikaner working class, petty bourgeois and farmers to:

- (a) restructure the relationship between South African capitalism and British imperialism in a way which both extended the economic and political power of the Afrikaner and preserved the reduced interests of foreign imperialism;
- (b) guarantee the existence and extension of labour aristocratic privileges (wages, conditions of employment, job reservation) of the small Afrikaner working class which felt itself threatened by the mass of unskilled African labour below and the skilled white immigrant labour from above;
- (c) restrict the freedom of movement and urbanisation of black labour to provide cheap abundant agricultural labour;
- (d) encourage the emergence of an independent Afrikaner bourgeoisie.

The success of that alliance resulted in the consolidation of the apartheid state after the Second World War which further systematised racial discrimination, job segregation and land division, entrenching the alliance between South African capital and the white working class.

4. South African monopoly capitalism finally attained the status of an independent imperialist

power in the 1960s. To-day, the economy is highly monopolised; Anglo-American, a predominantly South African owned multi-national, towers above all else. The ownership of capital is overwhelmingly in the hands of English and Afrikaner South Africans.

From the beginning of its imperialist development South Africa has been an exporter of capital. However, because the greatest source of super-profits was to be found INTERNALLY within the mines and industry of South Africa, this remained relatively undeveloped even though it was still responsible for opening up Namibia to imperialist exploitation. Only in the late 1970s with the evident stagnation of monopoly capitalism in South Africa did the rate of increase in the export of capital accelerate.

5. Historically, South Africa has been a major source of strategically important raw materials and a prime source of superprofits. Peak profitability has occurred after World War 2, in the 1960s and 1970s, and this period witnessed the gradual eclipse of British imperialism's role as chief foreign investor by American imperialism. Britain, however, retains a greater political leverage due to its historical and current political ties inside South Africa. Coincidental with the late 1970s and 1980s crisis of South African monopoly capitalism, the rate of increases of new British and US investment in South Africa has declined due to falling profitability.

Britain and the US fear above all the destruction of Apartheid from below by a revolution of the black masses which would threaten their investments. They do however seek to pressure the Afrikaner alliance to reform Apartheid so as to co-opt into the South African ruling class a black component, i.e. to do a deal with the black nationalists, giving them a subordinate share in political power, the better to head off and where necessary repress the struggles of the black workers and the urban poor. The problem for them is how to pressure the South African state to grant 'concessions' in such a way as not to break up its repressive apparatus.

6. Apartheid made possible the most ruthless exploitation of the black working class. The crisis of South African monopoly capitalism in the 1970s and growing black militancy forced the monopolists to reconsider the labour aristocratic privileges of the white Afrikaner working class.

The restructuring of Apartheid in the 1970s (removal of certain features of 'petty Apartheid', erosion of the job bar, reforms of residential rights) was an attempt to deal with the crisis of South African capitalism by lowering costs and raising labour productivity.

Government inquiries, such as the Wiehahn Report, aimed to address the cramping effects of Apartheid policies on capitalist accumulation in

so far as they restricted the movement of black labour to urban industry, prevented a necessary minimal level of black literacy and technical education and created artificial shortages of skilled labour. Whilst there was an unevenness in the response of different sections of South African capitalists, some restructuring was in their general interest.

7. The restructuring of Apartheid presupposed above all its continuation in the decisive sphere of political rights. The Constitutional initiatives of the early 1980s have re-affirmed the opposition of Afrikaner nationalism to political power for the African masses. Instead, through the 1983 Constitution they have endeavoured unsuccessfully to:

(a) divide the Asian and Coloured communities from the African masses;

(b) strengthen the executive and military powers of the President to equip the state with the repressive power necessary to crush black resistance;

(c) indicate to the class collaborationist black petty bourgeoisie and tribal leaders that power sharing may come in time.

COUNTER-REVOLUTION

8. Because of the class alliance on which it rests, the white supremacist Afrikaner bourgeoisie cannot reform Apartheid out of existence 'from above'. The white labour aristocracy and petty bourgeoisie who constitute the state bureaucracy and armed forces will not voluntarily surrender their privileges. Apartheid will only be destroyed by a mighty revolutionary movement of the black masses and first and foremost the black proletariat. Can capitalism survive the death of Apartheid? This cannot be excluded but the price of its survival would be a bourgeois-democratic counter-revolution which robbed the rural and urban workers of their victory.

The agency for this abortion of the South African revolution is the nascent black bourgeoisie and the aspirant petty bourgeoisie who will seek to strike a deal with defeated South African and multi-national big capital. Any programme which outlines a self-contained bourgeois-democratic stage opens the door to a capitalist South Africa. Any coalition of class forces built on such a perspective stands to be betrayed at any and every critical juncture by the treacherous bourgeoisie and the vacillating petty bourgeois forces. Only working class leadership and the goal of the proletarian dictatorship can assure victory for the South African revolution against racist, imperialist capital.

9. The South African revolution must be made

South Africa

permanent or it will not successfully solve the burning social problems of the South African masses - unemployment, poverty, exploitation. The only class that can carry through this permanent revolution is the black proletariat, primarily the black African working class together with the much smaller Asian and 'Coloured' working class, and its allies in the impoverished sections of the black petty bourgeoisie.

If the black proletariat forms the vanguard class in the South African revolution then within this proletariat the vanguard is to be found in different sectors. First, the trade unions whose social power and degree of urbanisation places them in the front ranks. Alongside them stand the youth and the women of the townships who bear the brunt of the struggle at the moment. No one political ideology unites these vanguard elements. They look variously to the ANC, Black Consciousness, or even to no party at all. But a revolutionary nucleus must direct its activity and propaganda first and foremost to these struggling sections without discriminating on the basis of the professed political ideology of these sections.

The white working class forms a reactionary roadblock. For it is not simply a white segment of the South African proletariat but a massively privileged and pampered labour aristocracy - large sections of which are employed in the repressive Apartheid state apparatus or in the role of overseers and task masters of the black proletariat. Winning the white workers over cannot be a condition of the South African revolution. Under the pressure of mass upheaval, through the imminent prospect of the loss of all their privileges, individuals or even sections of skilled workers may come over to the black proletariat. They should be encouraged to do so. But there can be no special privileges or reserved place for the white working class in the workers' united front, that is, in the common struggle of the working class to smash apartheid.

10. The only consistently revolutionary class in South Africa is the black proletariat. Apartheid seeks to retard its homogeneity and prevent its urbanisation. However, by the mid 1980s this class, through its position in mining, manufacturing and agriculture, possessed all the social power necessary to deal a decisive blow to the Apartheid state together with its capitalist roots.

The black proletariat has a rich history of struggle and organisation, but never have the black workers been more organised than today, with 10% in trade unions. The unions embrace one part of the vanguard of the black working class. Since 1973 a series of successful struggles by black workers has boosted confidence and legal organisation. Substantial increases in wages have been won and with it legal recognition of black trade unionism.



While class collaboration is the natural political outlook of reformist trade unionism, no established caste of trade union bureaucrats exists AS YET in the black trade unions. Consequently, a tradition of rank and file democracy pervades the new unions. This rank and file democracy will have to be vigorously and consciously defended within the new federation COSATU. The officialdom of this federation will immediately come under the pressure of the state and the multinationals. Its growth will provide a basis for bureaucratic privilege. Lack of an alternative revolutionary communist leadership will tend to allow the leaders to use the unions as a brake on the mass struggles, as a de-politicising agency rather than a school for socialism and an instrument of the class struggle.

11. The emergence of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) out of a merger of FOSATU, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and other smaller unions represents an important landmark in the history of black trade unionism. It is crucial that the new federation affirm the traditional rank and file democracy and accountability that it inscribed in the origins of the new unions. The rank and file need to be alert to the pressure of the conservative trade union bureaucracies of the international trade union movement

who with their advice and money aim to crystallise out of the new federation a caste of trade union officials increasingly remote from their members.

Unity in action in a common struggle is a thousand times more important than mere organisational fusion. This is especially true given the existence of large numbers of Black Consciousness inspired union members who remain outside COSATU, and of black members in the Trade Union Congress of South Africa (TUCSA).

The new federation must use the enthusiasm and momentum now established to recruit the bulk of non-union black labour to its ranks and build its unions along industrial lines. While advocating 'non-racialism' within the working class organisations COSATU should nevertheless welcome the black-only unions to its ranks without demanding that they change their own constitutions.

THE ANC AND THE UDF

12. More decisive, however, for the future of the South African revolution is how the unions will answer the question: What political role shall we play? Two answers hold the stage today. In the first place, Popular Frontism. Some unions (CUSA, MGWU, FACTU) have endorsed the politics of the United Democratic Front (and hence the ANC). Along this road lies the betrayal of the proletariat's independent class interests in the name of the 'national revolution' against Apartheid.

Other unions - such as those previously in FOSATU - have rejected this road, but only to date negatively. They have embraced Economism. While

these unions proclaim the 'independence' of the unions from popular front parties they do so in a manner which confines the unions to economic issues, leaving the field clear for the UDF/ANC to dominate the POLITICAL struggle. Economism cannot be a barrier to class collaboration politics since it itself hands over politics to the forces of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. The trade unions cannot in real life avoid political struggle.

The alternative that faces the organised working class is not 'politics or no politics' but whether the working class shall lead the political struggle or be led. Whether it will fight for its own class political objectives or see its strength used in the interests of other classes, its present and future exploiters.

The grip of Popular Frontism is tightening over the black unions. The growing mass support for the ANC/UDF among unorganised black workers and in the townships has intensified the pressure upon the 'economists' to recognise the leading role of the ANC in the political struggle. It is therefore vital that, when the black unions enter the struggle against Botha around political slogans, the scope and duration of this action should not be controlled by the popular front. Only if the workers' economic organisations take up the task of forming a political leadership - a party with a programme for working class power - will the dangers of economism and popular frontism be overcome.

In the short term the ANC is likely to increase its influence in COSATU. However, the likelihood of attacks on COSATU by the Apartheid state and



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the subsequent deepening of the class struggle opens a real opportunity for revolutionaries within COSATU to expose the ANC's conciliatory popular frontism.

13. The need for an independent working class party with a programme for working class power becomes daily more urgent. The immediate danger facing the black proletariat is that the heroic resistance of the youth, unemployed and women in the townships - seeking to defend themselves from police and army harassment - will exhaust itself before the black trade unions enter the fray around political slogans and for political revolutionary goals. Rather than leaving the political leadership in the hands of the UDF/ANC, the trade unions must be called upon to build an independent class party of the proletariat. In this work it is clear that revolutionaries will have to fight alongside workers and leaders who as yet do not see that such a party must become a revolutionary communist combat party. The decision on the party's programme and final structure must be the outcome of democratic internal debate and the free competition of tendencies.

Doubtless forces will arise which will seek to direct the workers' party onto the road of a reformist labour party. If the unions actually take up its formation, Stalinism, despite its opposition to any mass independent workers' party, will certainly intervene to direct it into a class collaborationist popular front strategy. Against these tendencies, revolutionaries must fight to define the party, in struggle, on the basis of an action programme which starts from the immediate revolutionary-democratic task of smashing Apartheid and shows how this must be continued into the seizure of political power by the working class. In the process, revolutionaries would have to fight for the structures and organisations of a mass Leninist combat party - drawing in all the militants of the unions, the youth, the women and the rural workers. Only such an organisation could survive the brutal repression and illegality that is ever present in South Africa.

14. There are many political forces in South Africa who are enemies of the independent struggle of the working class and relentless opponents of a revolutionary party which would fight to lead this struggle with the programme of permanent revolution. Chief among them is the African National Congress. This is a petty bourgeois Nationalist formation dominated politically by the Stalinist South African Communist Party (SACP). Through its 'legal' front - the UDF - and through control of the students' organisation COSA, the ANC exercises considerable influence.

Its programme, since the 1950s, has been furnished by the SACP and is thoroughly Stalinist. It defines the impending revolution against apartheid as a bourgeois-democratic one. From the 1920s through the Freedom Charter until today, the ANC's programme subordinates the workers' movement to a

'peoples front' of petty bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists and abandons the 'historic goal' of socialism to a distant future in favour of an idealised version of bourgeois democracy.

This strategy is reactionary and utopian. It is reactionary since it hands leadership of the revolution to the petty bourgeoisie - a class which at the critical moment and because of its many ties with the bourgeoisie will abandon the proletariat and rural poor to satisfy its own demands.

It is utopian, because the ANC's 'democracy' is not attainable or sustainable on the basis of a crisis-racked capitalism in the last quarter of the 20th century. Bonapartism presiding over weak capitalism and dominating the workers and poor peasants (as in Zimbabwe) or a revolutionary workers' government expropriating capitalist property are the choices that confront South Africa's impending proletarian revolution.

15. The strategy and tactics of the ANC have oscillated between a civil rights protest movement and guerrillaism, or a combination of both. The civil rights protest dissipated the potential of mass struggles to overthrow the Apartheid state; guerrillaism arose on the basis of the defeat and subsiding of the mass struggle and served to deepen and confirm that ebb in mass resistance. Combined with a fetishism of illegality, and a scornful, sectarian attitude to the emergence of the new trade unions, the ANC and SACP have conducted the armed struggle on the margins of the mass movement. Indeed, it has been the spontaneous struggles of the townships not the armed actions of the ANC which have shaken the regime.

Whilst of course it is the duty of all revolutionaries to defend the ANC's freedom fighters against the racist state, guerrilla actions and sabotage EVEN AT a period of mass upheaval like the present should play at the most an auxiliary role since the task of a revolutionary vanguard is to start the process of training and arming the masses.

For revolutionary communists the tactics of the armed struggle must relate to the actions of the masses at every stage. The best way for this to occur in the first instance is to organise the DEFENCE of protests, strikes, boycotts, the need to prevent evictions, the organisation of land seizures. Through these tasks a workers' militia can be formed which, tied to the growth and development of the mass proletarian struggle (strikes, General Strike), can move forward from defensive actions through the seizure of the factories, to the organisation of the insurrection itself.

16. The black masses of South Africa must be alerted to the dangers of the ANC/UDF. The reaction of the ANC to the toothless measures of the Commonwealth Conference, the Zambian discussions with the leading figures of South African capitalism - all indicate that in the desperate search

for a 'community of interest' between black workers and progressive sections of domestic capital, the ANC may well boycott its own democratic programme and settle for an agreement short of one person - one vote; or concede 'constitutional guarantees', i.e. economic and political power, to the white minority.

17. Through the UDF the Church exercises considerable political influence over the black masses. Where political and cultural life has been brutally restricted for decades, where poverty and oppression triumphs, there the church reaps the benefit, becomes a focus for opposition and resistance. But Tutu and Boesak preach peace and non-violence in the face of state murder; they court the liberal and democratic sympathies of European and US imperialism (Boesak organised Kennedy's tour) and therefore distance themselves from appeals to the international labour movement. With due sensitivity to the deeply held religious convictions of the masses, revolutionaries must - through their slogans and demands - seek to drive a wedge between the workers and youth who overflow the churches and the Tutus and Boesaks whose shallow demagoguery flows uninterruptedly from the pulpits.



Tutu and Boesak



BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS, AZAPO & THE NFC

18. An alternative leadership to the Stalinists and the ANC seems to be provided by the National Forum Committee and its most important constituent organisation, the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO). The NFC/AZAPO forces make very wide-ran-

ging criticisms of the UDF. The NFC's "Manifesto of the Azanian People" claims to put the struggle for national liberation in South Africa on a socialist course.

They denounce the UDF as a Popular Front. A component of the NFC, the Cape Action League (CAL), rejects alliances with the bourgeoisie. The apparent rejection of both the popular front strategy of the Stalinists and the stage-ist 'Freedom Charter' represents both the continued influence of 'Trotskyism', albeit of a centrist liquidationist current, and the pressure towards class independence emanating from the growth of the black proletariat and its independent trade unions.

19. The other, indeed the major political influence in the NFC/AZAPO is the Black Consciousness movement. Whilst this was born in the community and school student struggles of the early and mid-seventies it took much from earlier 'Africanist' traditions as well as the US Black Power current. While rejecting the SACP/ANC tradition they also rejected class analysis altogether. Steve Biko argued for black banks and black businesses. The movement centred on community welfare and educational projects. It undoubtedly aided a new generation of young blacks, overcoming the divisions into which the Apartheid state sought and seeks to split the oppressed masses.

20. Whilst the NFC/AZAPO have moved sharply to the left they have not been able to stem the growth of the ANC's influence. Their programme is not a coherent alternative to that of the ANC. They talk about a 'maximum programme of socialist transformation', but between this and a series of 'rights' to work, to free education, decent housing, health, legal and community services, there is no bridge of transitional demands. They have no clear conception of democratic demands and how the fight for them should play a central role in the overthrow of the Apartheid state. On the national question, in rejecting the regime's attempt to split the oppressed, in rejecting the SACP/ANC's 'multiracialism', insisting on 'One Azania, One Nation', they reject the democratic right of self-determination for the oppressed peoples. To do this can strengthen separatism and fears of oppression in a future South Africa/Azania amongst minority peoples within the struggle against apartheid.

The left wing of the NFC, the Cape Action League, despite its apparent rejection of the Popular Front, in fact opens the road to it by advocating strategic alliances with petty bourgeois nationalism, even to the extent of a common party.

21. Also, the Black Consciousness tradition does not produce a correct orientation vis a vis the trade unions. Supporters of this tendency organise the AZACTU and are influential in the CUSA feder-

ations. They fight against being drawn into the UDF popular front behind slogans of non-political trade unionism. This is a doubly false policy when the unions are faced with the task of leading the mass resistance to Botha's crackdown. All fighting unions should be within COSATU seeking to direct the half-million strong black unions towards a general strike and towards forming a workers' party.

Of course revolutionary communists should direct much of their propaganda and wherever necessary work within the left and Black Consciousness organisations in order to show that opposition to the popular front, and espousal of working class independence, requires working class political leadership, through a Leninist combat party, in the struggle to make the South African revolution permanent.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

22. In the developing revolutionary situation in South Africa the proletariat alone can lead all of the oppressed masses to victory against the racist state and against capitalism and imperialism. While the revolution has begun as a democratic one, it must not be confined to a democratic stage. Permanent revolution can, alone, guarantee the completion of democratic tasks by fusing the struggle for democracy inextricably with the struggle for socialist revolution. To take this road the proletariat must solve, in struggle, its crisis of leadership.

A revolutionary leadership must be forged in the present struggle. The hallmark of a revolutionary party is its programme. In South Africa a revolutionary action programme must link the struggle for immediate and democratic demands with the struggle for proletarian power. It must be a transitional programme.

23. The struggles around rents, education, against forced removals and for the consumer boycotts have been centred on the townships. They have shown both the determination and ability of the youth and women to lead mass mobilisations against the Apartheid state. These actions must be defended and supported by the organised working class through building joint action councils and militias. The townships on their own cannot defeat either the Apartheid state or its particular laws and state forces. They can be isolated, surrounded and smashed. They cannot paralyse the regime.

In the struggle against the regime an advance from localised battles must be made. The trade unions must take the lead in launching a general strike. Only the political General Strike can mobilise the entire oppressed, led by the working class, for a direct confrontation with the regime. It can pave the way for the question of power to be posed point blank. It can, if it develops into an insurrection, answer that question in a revol-

utionary fashion. It can draw into it the youth of the townships and colleges, the unemployed, the women and the unorganised, fusing all of the local and partial struggles.



SACTU metal workers' meeting

24. Democratic slogans are of central importance in the revolutionary programme for South Africa. The masses are crying out for political rights. In every sphere of struggle - the workplace, the townships, the homelands, education - the masses come daily face to face with the absence of elementary democratic rights. Their illusions in democratic rights alone as the solution to their exploitation and oppression, and their illusions in leaders who would compromise in the struggle for political democracy, make it all the more vital that revolutionaries take up and fight to lead the struggle for the full realisation of the democratic aspirations of the masses. These cannot be achieved by any form of compromise with, or concessions from, the Apartheid state. That regime is incompatible with political democracy for the black masses.

In place of negotiated concessions, the proletariat and oppressed must fight for:

- * The destruction of the Apartheid state and ALL its discriminatory laws and regulations denying permanent residency rights, equal status etc. to the black masses.
- * Universal, equal suffrage for all people over the age of 16.
- * The break up of the standing army and police and their replacement with a people's militia.
- * Down with the Balkanisation of South Africa. For a united republic, but with the provision of the right to self-determination, up to and including separation of any people excluding the white oppressor community.

* For an end to imperialist secret diplomacy. Renounce all treaties made by imperialism. Support the struggles of the African masses against imperialism and its agents.

* Abolition of the barbarous separation of the family that is imposed by Apartheid. For complete freedom in the relations between men, women and children.

* For a sovereign Constituent Assembly to be convened immediately open to all parties, excluding the counter-revolutionary ones who seek to maintain or re-impose the Apartheid order.

25. The engine of the South African revolution will be the urban black proletariat, but it must also seek allies amongst the millions of rural blacks, most immediately with the 1.4 million rural proletarians working on white-owned farms - the natural agents of democratic collectivisation.

But this is not enough. Though South Africa lacks a large peasantry in the classic sense, and the establishment of millions of atomised small holdings is not in the proletariat's interest, millions are condemned to poverty and starvation in the 'homelands' and other rural areas. There are, in addition, many "squatters" and illegal occupiers of abandoned white-owned land. These layers cannot be mobilised for the revolution without the leadership of the concentrated urban workers, who must encourage and support the establishment of rural soviets to develop and express the needs and aspirations of the rural masses, soviets whose programme would include:

* Assist in the development of a plan that can ensure the land is utilised to the maximum benefit of the Azanian people.

* Seize the large "white" farms and wherever possible, collectivise them within a system of land nationalisation.

* Legitimise all illegal 'squatters' and occupiers of 'black spots' and abandoned "white" land.

* Discourage the breaking up of large holdings by the land hungry, while remaining willing to support the revolutionary seizure and break-up of large estates where this happens.

* Reach out to the families of migrant workers in the rest of southern Africa, helping to spread the revolution throughout the sub-continent.

26. The mass of black women must be mobilised against their own specific oppression, in an independent democratically organised movement, under revolutionary working class leadership, as a vital component of the permanent revolution.

Denied all rights as blacks, the women are further oppressed (i) as servant labour for the privileged whites; (ii) as extra-cheap labour in industry and services; (iii) as domestic slaves in their own families. Particularly harsh is the lot of women in the 'homelands' and other rural areas who bear children and are left to raise them in squalid housing conditions, often without their male partners for the long periods of their migration, and subsisting on tiny plots of soil with unreliable small remittances from their absent partners.

The absence of social and health services is a burden more crushing on black women than for any other section of the blacks. The Bantu and Church schools deny women the education that is vital to their own sexual self-determination, in particular for the control of their own fertility.

In order to mobilise the mass of oppressed women to their fullest potential and for their most important needs, the following must be fought for:

* Full unionisation of women workers, with the right of caucus, in industrial unions; equal pay and a minimum wage; equal opportunity in training and hiring; free workplace creches and paid maternity leave.

* Comprehensive sex education; free, safe contraception, sterilisation and abortion available on demand.

* Free comprehensive nationalised health services under working class control. A programme of public works under working class control to make adequate housing available.

* Free legal divorce at the request of one partner and adequate state maintenance for the dependents.



South Africa



- * A comprehensive social welfare system.

- * Free community creches and nursery schools, subsidised community canteens as steps towards the socialisation of housework.

- * Education and action in the mass organisations to combat all forms of sexual harassment and male chauvinism.

27. The task of winning democracy is in itself a revolutionary task in South Africa. The working class must not eschew politics. It must take its place at the forefront of the struggle. It must build factory and workplace councils to organise strikes, link up with township committees in the struggle. It must organise a militia based on these action councils. Such councils and such a militia can stop a Constituent Assembly being the plaything of those who wish to negotiate with imperialism and those who wish to construct a democratic obstacle to working class power. Such councils must become town-wide organisations, struggling against Apartheid AND providing a real alternative state power - SOVIET (Action Council) POWER.

To succeed in this struggle the South African proletariat must take the lead in organising and leading a mass insurrection. In breaking up the armed forces of Apartheid the opportunity exists to win the black rank and file from their white officers, to create black soldiers' councils, to elect officers and to mete out punishment to the racists.

28. The working class must never for one minute forget or subordinate its own class demands in the present struggle. Better wages, an end to all

discrimination in the workplace, shorter hours and better conditions, full union rights etc. must ALL be fought for. At the same time the working class must link these immediate demands to the political struggle for power. It must fight for:

- * Workers' control of production, hiring and firing, speed and intensity of work, of safety and of the length of the working day.

- * For workers' control over the length of the working week so that available work may be shared and the unemployed, including women, given jobs.

- * For the protection of wages against inflation by a sliding scale of increases linked to price increases. For committees of the workers and women's organisations to decide on the workers' cost of living index and the wage increases needed, and on equal pay for women workers.

- * For mass workplace based democracy - via the mass meeting, protected from the bosses and their thugs by WORKERS' DEFENCE SQUADS - to take all decisions requiring action and impose workers' control.

- * Open the books of the capitalist enterprises to the inspection of the workers. The workers have had to pay in blood for the profit margins to be found in the ledgers of Anglo-American and the other corporations. They demand to see the extent of their exploitation, the better to end it.

- * Nationalise without compensation and put under workers' control, the giant factories and industries owned by the white capitalists, and foreign capitalists.

29. To defend each and every one of its gains and

to press home each and every one of its demands, the working class needs to take state power. Only such power can improve the lot of all of South Africa's oppressed masses. The workers' councils must not allow democracy in the shape of a Constituent Assembly to hinder it in the struggle for power. They must press on, relentlessly, to assert their own power under the slogan:

FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA/AZANIA

30. The struggle of the South African masses against the Apartheid state and for proletarian revolution will have an enormous impact on the states in Southern Africa dominated by South African imperialism. It will progressively throw into crisis the regimes which have compromised and collaborated with the Apartheid state. In the

struggle for workers' power, the South African masses must stand at the forefront of aiding and solidarising with the struggles which develop against the South African imperialists and their agents. A victorious proletarian revolution in South Africa would immediately take steps to spread the revolution beyond its borders, starting with the surrounding states previously dominated by South African imperialism. Only such a perspective "for a federation of Workers States of Southern Africa" would buttress the workers' republic of South Africa against the inevitable attack by imperialism and open the prospect of overcoming the economic and social distortions resulting from South African imperialism's domination of the surrounding states.

**FOR A FEDERATION OF WORKERS' STATES
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

The Anti-Imperialist United Front

We print below an exchange on the question of the Anti-Imperialist United Front between the Gruppo Operaio Rivoluzionario (GOR) of Italy and Workers Power, on behalf of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI). The first contribution is directly reprinted from *International Trotskyist Correspondence* No. 1 June 1985 published by the GOR, the Revolutionary Workers Party of Sri Lanka and the Bolschewiki-Leninisten of West Germany.

The debate on the Anti-Imperialist United Front is part of a continuing discussion process between the MRCI and the above groups aimed at clarifying and if possible resolving the differences that exist between our organisations. While the exchange revolves around the historical development of the tactic in the early period of the Communist International it has a vital significance for today's struggle. In country after country in the semi-colonial world the question of the united front with non-proletarian forces in the struggle against imperialism and its puppets remains a burning question. In Angola, Mozambique, Iran, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua to name only a few of the recent anti-imperialist struggles, a correct orientation, clear tactics towards the petit-bourgeois

and bourgeois forces involved in these struggles was crucial to the development of revolutionary proletarian forces and to the successful outcome of the struggle.

Given the systematic falsification and perversion of the revolutionary policies of the Comintern, not just by the Stalinists, but by all varieties of centrist "Trotskyism", we make no apology for attempting to resume the revolutionary tactic of the Anti-Imperialist United Front. We do this not in an uncritical or dogmatic way, recognising that the theses and resolutions on revolutionary strategy in the colonial and semi-colonial world during the first four Congresses of the C.I. involved an ongoing debate. This debate was fatally cut short by the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Party, was in any case marred by the failure to programmatically encompass the perspective of Permanent Revolution within the tactics and strategy of the Comintern.

We hope this contribution will help lay the basis for further development of the Communist tactic of the Anti-Imperialist United Front in the living struggles of the masses against the yoke of imperialist exploitation throughout the world.

Proletariat, Peasantry, and Bourgeoisie in Backward Countries in the Imperialist Epoch

THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST UNITED FRONT: A TROTSKYIST CRITIQUE

By Dino Albani (member of the Executive Committee of the GOR)

"The International Left Opposition stands on the ground of the first four congresses of the Comintern. This does not mean that it bows before every letter of its decisions, many of which have been contradicted by subsequent events."

-- L. TROTSKY, "The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods" (December 1932), in *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1932-33), New York 1972, pp. 51-52

The purpose of the following study is to prove that the "Anti-Imperialist United Front" (AIUF) tactic in colonial and semi-colonial countries not only

failed to lead, and will never lead, to a victory of the proletariat in these countries, but it has also led, it is leading and will lead only to dis-

astrous defeats of the proletarian and peasant movement.

To avoid misunderstandings, we want to make it clear in advance that by AIUF we mean not only a temporary common action carried out together with national bourgeois forces (which are plausible in certain cases in order to beat a common enemy), but also what the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) meant by AIUF when it formulated this slogan in 1922, i.e. an agreement with national bourgeois forces aimed at carrying on systematic joint actions in view of achieving a common goal.

THE FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

The AIUF slogan was formally adopted for the first time by the Communist International (Comintern) at its IV World Congress (November 5-December 5, 1922), and ratified in the "Theses on the Eastern Question".

But during the First Congress of the Communist and Revolutionary Organizations of the Far East, which took place in Moscow in January 1922, the idea of a common front between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie in colonial and semi-colonial countries had already been put forward. Zinoviev, who held the reins of that congress, stated that Eastern Asia was not yet ripe for a socialist revolution but only for "an anti-imperialist national revolution". He was then echoed by Safarov who, pausing in particular on the Chinese and the Korean situations, put forward the idea that communists must confine themselves to "support every national-revolutionary movement" (1).

Today it appears clearer than ever that the Zinovievite theses on the revolution in Eastern countries started from the assumption that in colonial and semi-colonial countries the socialist revolution could not be posed on the agenda but after the fulfilment of a bourgeois-democratic revolution which would have handed the power over to the national bourgeoisie. On the other hand, it is quite well-known that Zinoviev did not fully understand the universal implications and lessons of the October revolution.

The "Theses on the Tasks of Communists in the Far East", adopted by that congress in January 1922 and conceived by Zinoviev himself, confirmed the persistence of a stage-ist conception of the revolution in regard to the Eastern countries. As a matter of fact, the theses stated in a lapidary way that:

"Although under the present international circumstances the division of the program of the Communist Parties into a minimum program and a maximum program has only a restricted significance, such a division should be considered valid in the future only for the Far Eastern countries (2), since the next stage of the development of these countries is the democratic revolution and the independent class organization of the proletariat both in the political and the economic fields." (3)

Even though these theses consented to the solicitations coming from M.N.Roy about the autonomous tasks of the communist movement (those very solicitations had made themselves been noticed two years before at the II World Congress of the Comintern, when Roy introduced his supplementary theses on

the colonial question), it was clear that they assigned an anti-imperialist, revolutionary role to the national bourgeoisie in Eastern Asia.

During those very years, most of the Far Eastern countries were under the colonial domination of the imperialist West. It was not possible to exclude *a priori* that, in such a context, the various national bourgeoisies, in order to achieve national independence, were ready to lead a head-on clash against imperialism with revolutionary implications. In fact, should these bourgeoisies have chosen the path of an open confrontation with the colonialist powers, this would have represented an historical fact of progressive significance and scope. But at that time, this was merely an hypothesis -- an hypothesis which was to be decisively belied by subsequent events.

On the contrary, basing himself upon the Russian experience and displaying his extraordinary political insight, Trotsky warned the Eastern communists not to foster immoderate illusions about the national bourgeoisie's ability to go much ahead in the struggle against imperialism. In his "Report on the World Economic Crisis and the New Tasks of the Communist International", delivered at the second session of the Comintern's III World Congress on June 23, 1921, he expounded the idea that:

"(...) The latter's /the native bourgeoisie's, Ed./ struggle against foreign imperialist domination cannot, however, be either consistent or energetic inasmuch as the native bourgeoisie itself is intimately bound up with foreign capital and represents to a large measure an agency of foreign capital." (4)

The political, tactical, and strategic consequences such an analysis involved to the communist movements in Eastern countries are clearly different from the Zinovievite theses. Whereas for Zinoviev the national bourgeoisie could be able to lead a national-democratic revolution, Trotsky stressed that this very bourgeoisie, because of its inextricable links with imperialism, was unable to play such a role: only a proletarian revolutionary movement could carry out the bourgeois-democratic tasks of the revolution.

Tens of books and essays written during the last fifty years about the Eastern countries by historians of the most dissimilar orientations and, what is more, the events themselves, fully proved that Trotsky, and those in the Comintern who in 1921 warned the communists in Eastern Asia against the idea that the bourgeoisie in these countries could be able to lead a national-democratic revolution, were correct.

It took eight years, marked by the tragedy of the Chinese revolution of 1926-27, before Trotsky extended the theory of Permanent Revolution to all colonial and semi-colonial countries.

* * *

In any case, under the pressure exerted by Zinoviev, the IV Congress of the Comintern proclaimed the need for a united front of the proletariat and the forces of the national bourgeoisie. From the theses adopted by that congress it emerged clearly that the crucial question for Eastern countries was the achievement of national independence:

"The main task common to every revolutionary nationalist movements consists in achieving national unity and attaining State independence." (5)

The "Theses on the Eastern Question", claiming

that the national bourgeoisies were certainly interested in achieving national independence, counselled the dawning Communist Parties to set up an "Anti-Imperialist United Front" together with them. This suggestion rested on the idea that:

"(...) The proletariat in its turn upholds and puts forward partial democratic demands such as, for example, the demand for an independent democratic republic, the right to vote for women, etc., insofar as the present relationship of forces prevents it from setting itself the carrying out of the program for Sovietization as a day-to-day task." (6)

It is clear that even in this case the theses expounded the sybilline idea that the socialist program, and the anti-capitalist tasks deriving from it as well, could be put forward only after the achievement of national independence. On the other hand, another mistake can be perceived, which consists in the false equation: the achievement of national independence is equal to the national-democratic revolution. In point of fact, the whole phenomenon of the so-called "decolonization" of dependent countries has showed that the achievement of national independence did not lead to any proper democratic revolution. Moreover, in the "Theses on the Eastern Question" the stage-ist conception (of Menshevik origin) found again its place, above all when they assert that the existing relationship of forces does not allow communists to put socialist demands on the agenda. As it happened during the most crucial days of the Bolshevik revolution, Zinoviev was thus revealing once again that he had not thoroughly realized the implications of the Russian revolution.

Another passage of these theses shows how Zinoviev, and the majority of the delegates who adopted the theses themselves, were fostering dangerous illusions about the revolutionary capacities of the national bourgeoisie:

"(...) It is necessary to force the national bourgeois parties to understand at best the importance of the agrarian revolutionary program." (7)

Subsequent historical events would have shown that the national bourgeoisies in colonial and semi-colonial countries, while parading their firm resoluteness to achieve independence, were also inclined to preserve landed property and the domination of the land aristocracy in the countryside.

In some way, it can be stated that the AIUF formula could be considered at that time as an "algebraic formula" which did not exclude the possibility of the national bourgeoisie's playing a revolutionary role. Thus, the central idea of the theses was plainly that it was necessary to counterpose the national bourgeoisie-proletariat-peasantry's bloc to the imperialism-feudal classes' bloc. Such a lining-up, however, even though it occurred in a limited number of cases, soon gave way for an imperialism-feudal classes-national bourgeoisie's bloc in a counterrevolutionary sense.

M.N.Roy was the only one who, from the platform of the IV Congress, kept his distance from the illusions fostered by the majority of the speakers who dealt with the "Eastern question" about the possibility of a fighting alliance with the national bourgeoisie:

"(...) Roy maintained that the theses of the II Congress were wrong in the sense that they treated all colonial peoples according to an undifferentiated scheme, since they all were backward both on the economic and the political level. Now (November 1922) it was clear that a differentiation between three

different groups of colonial peoples should be taken into account in the analysis as well as in tactics: 1. those peoples who had already attained a certain degree of capitalist development, among whom there existed therefore a bourgeoisie with a developed class consciousness and a proletariat who was progressively winning its class consciousness; 2. those peoples among whom feudalism still stood as the backbone of the society; and 3. those peoples among whom there existed even more primitive conditions.

"(...) in those countries belonging to the first and the second groups -- Roy pointed out -- a process of reconciliation between the native upper layer and foreign imperialism was going on; faced with such a reality, the communist movement should have attempted to mobilize the working masses against the native upper layer and, in one and the same time, to take advantage of the disputes existing between the latter and foreign imperialism." (8)

Albeit Roy's positions were still permeated by the same the same subjectivist deviation which had already emerged at the II Congress and which was brought about by an idealist and almost mystic concept of the class consciousness, they represented the only noteworthy criticism of the Zinovievite conceptions at the IV Congress.

* * *

It seems to us that the major fault of the "Theses on the Eastern Question" resides in the fact that they mistook the progressive-in-itself character of a task like the national independence for the nature and the role of the class which, at least on paper, was mainly interested in achieving it. Contrary to this view, the experience of the anti-imperialist and the class struggle in backward countries has shown that the national bourgeoisie succeeded indeed in achieving the progressive aim of the national independence, but it also shown that it won independence by using a fundamentally reactionary method. In other words, as soon as it achieved independence, far from carrying out its own democratic program and from revolutionizing the pre-existing social order, the national bourgeoisie put itself under the political-military protection of imperialism and in a condition of economic subjection to it. The winning of independence in itself is not yet the bourgeois revolution.

The first result of the decisions taken by the IV Congress was the entry of the young Chinese Communist Party into the bourgeois Kuomintang (KMT) on occasion of the latter's I Congress in January 1924. The communists' entry into the bourgeois KMT, based upon the dangerous illusions which were being fostered in Moscow toward it, was a mistake which turned out to be fatal. Later on we will show how, as soon as he had won a political-military hegemony, Chiang Kai-shek smashed in blood not only the working-class Soviets but also the peasant revolution which, after 1925, was spreading throughout China. At that point, the theoretical hypothesis that the national bourgeoisie could march together with the proletariat against the feudal classes in order to liberate the country from the imperialist yoke, and the peasants from that of the landed property, should have been given up once and for all. Instead, we find even today among the supporters of the theory of Permanent Revolution those who

persist in re-proposing the ill-omened AIUF tactic. Yet after the tragedy of the Chinese revolution the Trotskyist movement and the Fourth International (which evidently drew the due lessons from events) refrained from raising the AIUF slogan any longer precisely because any hope that the bourgeoisie in backward countries could march together with the communists against imperialism, the land aristocracy, and the parasitic notables revealed themselves to be a completely reactionary utopia.

THE WARNING OF TURKEY

The events which were unfolding in Turkey casted a sinister light upon the decisions of the IV World Congress of the Comintern. The latter, quite correctly, did not hesitate to take the side of the Turkish bourgeois-nationalist movement against the British imperialism and its puppet regime in Constantinople. But such a support went far beyond a mere military support in the national liberation war led by Kemal Ataturk starting from the Spring of 1920, which was to put the whole country under his control a few months later.

Turkish communists, albeit still being a weak force, played a role of the first rank in this national struggle which the Comintern defined as a "revolutionary and anti-imperialist" one, whereas in reality it was so only partially.

As soon as Kemal and his nationalist government felt strong enough, they not only broke their alliance with the communists but started also a massive persecution against them -- a repression which culminated in January 1921 with the infamous assassination of sixteen Turkish communist leaders.

Faced with this fact of a tremendous political importance (which should have told the truth about the actual possibilities to set up a common front with the national bourgeoisies in backward countries in order to carry out the so-called "democratic stage" of the revolution), the Comintern raised only a feeble protest and the Russian workers' state went on maintaining its cordial relations with Kemal. In March 1921, soon after the persecution wave against the Turkish communists, Chicherin ratified on behalf of the USSR a treaty with Kemalist Turkey which laid emphasis on the solidarity existing between the two countries "in the struggle against imperialism" (9).

As a result of this Soviet-Turkish treaty, the Turkish CP got legalized again. But its legalization lasted only a few days. As soon as Turkey defeated Greece in September 1922 with the help of the Comintern and its Turkish section, Kemal became reconciled with the imperialist powers and in October 1922 he made another about-face and liquidated again the young Turkish CP by means of hundreds of arrests and summary executions.

These dramatic and meaningful events occurred just on the eve of the IV World Congress of the Comintern, which was summoned in fact just one month after the second wave of anti-communist persecutions carried out by Kemal. Under the stimulus of the Turkish delegate, the congress confined itself to adopting unanimously a motion of protest at its November 20 session, i.e. just a few days before beginning to discuss the "Eastern question" (10).

Once again it was the same M.N. Roy who, dealing with the Turkish events,

"thought that the policy of collaboration with bourgeois nationalism had gone too far.

Two years' experience in 'coordinating our strength with that of the bourgeois nationalist parties in these countries' had proved that this alliance was not always practicable. The leadership of the 'anti-imperialist front' could not be left in the hands of the 'timid and wavering bourgeoisie' (...)." (11)

Far from paying attention to Roy's warning, Radek repeated to the Turkish comrades that:

"Your first task, as soon as you have organized yourselves as a separate party, is to support the movement for national freedom in Turkey." (12)

Increasingly departing from the Leninist theses adopted by the II World Congress, certain speakers went even further in suggesting to support bourgeois nationalist forces in colonial countries. Completely abandoning the theses of the II Congress, E. Varga asserted that there could be countries (and he put forward the example of Turkey) where the big landowners themselves were the leaders of the national movement, and that in this case it was necessary to follow tactics which were different from those recommended by the II Congress.

Evidently, we cannot but agree with Professor Edward H. Carr's assessment of these positions:

"(...) Proletariat and peasants were required to subordinate their social programme to the immediate needs of a common national struggle against foreign imperialism. It was assumed that a nationally minded bourgeoisie, or even a nationally minded feudal aristocracy, would be ready to conduct a struggle for national liberation from the yoke of foreign imperialism in alliance with potentially revolutionary proletarians and peasants, who were only waiting for the moment of victory to turn against them and overthrow them." (13)

Under the stimulus of Radek (who, together with Zinoviev, played a surely ill-fated role at the IV World Congress), the congress itself defined Turkey as "the outpost of revolutionary East" and emphasized how it had "successfully resisted arms in hand the carrying out of the peace treaty" (14). The persecutions against Turkish communists did not appear so relevant politically to Bucharin, for a little later, during the XII Congress of the Bolshevik Party in April 1923, he stated that Turkey,

"in spite of all persecutions of communists, plays a revolutionary role, since she is a destructive instrument in relation to the imperialist system as a whole." (15)

To be sure, the anti-communist repression could not have led the world communist movement to take a defeatist or an equidistance stand in the dispute between the young Turkish nation and imperialism. The Turkish events, however, should have at least stimulated a more realistic reflection as to the dynamics of the revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Far from outlining such a materialistic analysis, "ultra-leftist" Bucharin was showing in those years that he understood in a merely schematic way the implications of the Leninist policy of supporting the struggle of the oppressed peoples for self-determination. In March 1919, at the VIII Congress of the Bolshevik Party, he asserted that:

"If we propound the solution of the right of self-determination for the colonies, the Hottentots, the Negroes, the Indians, etc., we lose nothing by it. On the contrary, we gain; for the national gain as a whole will damage foreign imperialism. (...) The most

outright nationalist movement, for example, that of the Hindus, is only water for our mill, since it contributes to the destruction of English imperialism." (16)

Evidently, it did not even cross Bucharin's mind that, taken in itself, the achievement of self-determination by a given people is not yet water for the mill of the socialist revolution, and that in order to make it become so it is necessary that several factors ripen and intersect each other, the most important of which being what class is conducting the struggle for self-determination, i.e. what class takes advantage of the conquest of this right. Contemporary history has shown that the achievement of national independence by a number of colonial peoples under the leadership of reactionary forces has not involved at all a weakening of imperialism. The imperialist domination merely changed its form: national oppression, with all its relative advantages in terms of super-profits, remained untouched together with all inequalities and the whole pre-existing feudal heritage.

Ten years later, referring himself again to the Eastern question with a quite different insight than Bucharin, Trotsky observed that:

"(...) The national problem separate and apart from class correlations is a fiction, a lie, a strangler's noose for the proletariat.

"(...) But from the proletarian standpoint, neither democracy as a whole nor national self-determination as an integral part of it stands above the classes; nor does either of them supply the highest criterion of revolutionary policy." (17)

* * *

In spite of the admonition Kemal Ataturk launched to the Comintern, the IV World Congress started the AIUF policy. And the first, crucial, and decisive test for this policy was to come a little later in China, where the conditions for a revolutionary victory were rapidly gathering.

THE CHINESE CATASTROPHE OF 1927

The "Resolution of the IKKI on the relations between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang", dated January 12, 1923, was adopted a little before the lamentable negotiations between Joffe and Sun Yat-sen. It stated that:

"(...) the fundamental task in China is the national revolution against the imperialists and their feudal agents inside the country (...)." (18)

And the "Directions of the IKKI to the III Congress of the Chinese Communist Party" (19), dated May 1923, went in the same sense, that is, to enchain Chinese communists to the KMT. In fact, under the guidance of reckless Borodin, the Chinese CP went on dragging behind the national bourgeoisie's carriage although the Chinese CP, at its IV Congress in January 1925, had

"denounced 'the big commercial and compradora bourgeoisie and the industrial bourgeoisie' as classes which did not intend to 'collaborate with the subaltern classes' in the national revolutionary movement." (20)

But the warnings coming from the Chinese communists did not change the directions which the

Soviet advisers (especially Borodin, Voitinsky, and Bubnov) were imparting, which were based upon the well-known idea that the first stage of the Chinese revolution would have been exclusively bourgeois-democratic. Illusions about the KMT went so far that, a few time later, Voitinsky, in an article published in Moscow on March 31, 1925, stated that:

"The Chinese Communist Party, however, which is a party of the industrial proletariat, will realize the hegemony of the proletariat neither in a direct way, as in purely capitalist countries, nor as in the Russian revolution, but by means of a national revolutionary party based upon the masses of the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie and the revolutionary intellectuals." (21)

In the course of the irresistible advance of the Chiang-led nationalist armies in 1926 against the various "warlords", the Chinese CP remained completely subordinate to the political-military discipline of the KMT despite the fact that during the advance of Chiang's troops the peasants had begun to overbearingly enter the political scene by energetically expropriating the big landowners, while the urban workers were setting up their own revolutionary councils (Soviets).

To be sure, it was necessary to give a military support to Chiang against Chinese "warlords", those puppets of imperialism. It was not possible to remain neutral before a fighting between the feudal-reactionary forces on one hand, and the popular forces on the other, albeit these latter were under the guidance of the national bourgeoisie. But the Chinese CP did not confine itself to set up a military bloc with Chiang. Despite the fact that during 1926 it had become clear that China was being upset by a revolutionary crisis characterized by the simultaneous radicalization of the workers and the peasants, the Chinese CP established that the aim of nationalizing the land was premature at this stage of the revolution and decided that it was necessary to remain faithful to the united front "against the militarists and the imperialists". For the Chinese CP, radical agrarian measures would have been feasible only after the overthrow of the "warlords" power, i.e. after Chiang's complete victory (22).

Thus, instead of supporting the peasant rebellions and the urban working-class uprisings, Chinese communists subordinated all this to the unity with Chiang in order not to irritate him.

By the way, it must be pointed out that the Chinese events of 1926-27 fully confirm the validity of our criticism of a whole series of groups claiming to be Trotskyist, which mistake the policy of temporary alliances with bourgeois-national forces for a proper united front. Shooting at a common enemy on the side of the national bourgeoisie does not imply at all any support to the purposes and ambitions of this class and to its determination to take the power. Accordingly, the Chinese CP should have had to give a military support to the "Northern expedition" against the "warlords" but, simultaneously, it should have had to encourage the peasant expropriations and the accession to power by the urban working-class Soviets, in open conflict with Chiang's ambitions. The class struggle should have to be carried on in spite of the military support to the nationalist armies and within the framework of this support. Let us repeat once again that a military bloc does not imply at all the setting up of a united front: two classes facing each other cannot stipulate a non-belligerence treaty.

During the whole Winter of 1926-27 the working class strike wave in China spread and strengthened itself side by side with the development of trade union organizations and embryonic forms of Soviets. However, it was quite far from crossing Borodin's mind that, under such a dual-power situation, Chiang was planning to impose his military dictatorship. In the course of those crucial months Borodin was still going on depicting Chiang as "a champion of the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist revolution", thus acting in the same way as Stalin and Kamenev did when they offered the Bolshevik support to the Provisional Government before Lenin's arrival in Russia. As Borodin himself was to say a few time later, Chiang was indeed

"an advocate of the bourgeois hegemony upon the national revolution." (...) "All that we asked him for was to carry out his bourgeois revolution through to the end." (23)

There is no doubt that such a position was sheer Menshevism. And here we must repeat once again to those "Trotskyists" who claim that the AIUF policy is correct that at the basis of this policy there were precisely the childish expectations that the national bourgeoisie could "carry out its bourgeois revolution through to the end".

The XV Conference of the Bolshevik Party, which was summoned in October 1926 under the guidance of the Stalin-Bucharin diarchy and which was completely in the dark as to the impending Chinese danger, agreed with the conduct of the Chinese CP and the Soviet advisers. It was in the same period that Trotsky, resolved once and for all to start criticizing the official policy for China.

When the VII IKKI met on November 22, 1926, Chiang's nationalist armies had already put China under their control. Euphory for the nationalists' victory inebriated the Stalinist-Bucharinist leading staff. At this meeting of the IKKI delegates both from the Chinese CP and from the KMT were sitting side by side. One delegate from the KMT made even a speech. But unfortunately, on this occasion no leader of the Russian Left Opposition thought that time had come to intervene on the Chinese question.

In the meanwhile, Chiang's victory definitely stressed a fact of fundamental political relevance, i.e. the sharp antagonism existing between the national and the social aims of the revolution, and also the basic incompatibility existing between the bourgeois-nationalist armies and the peasant rebellions. In the wake of Bucharin, the IKKI praised again the united front with the KMT. In fact, the theses submitted by Bucharin stressed that:

"(...) the main task of the moment is to set up a united front of all national revolutionary forces, including the anti-imperialist strata of the bourgeoisie (...)." (24)

Seeking to abate the Chinese CP's disappointment toward the alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, "dawning star" Manuilsky pointed out once again that the maintaining of the united front was "an absolute necessity" (25).

Again, M.N.Roy was the only one to stress that:

"(...) The upper strata of the national bourgeoisie, attracted by the prospect of sharing the profits of imperialism, could still support the national liberation movements, but they were also ready, when time had come, to 'form a united front with the imperialists against revolutionary China'. (...) the key to the victory over the imperialists was not to be found in the alliance with the national bourgeoisie but in the

agrarian revolution, that is, in the nationalization of land and the expropriation of the big landowners. (...) the peasants, under the leadership of the party /the Chinese CP, Ed./ and of the proletariat, should have been the motive force of the revolution." (26)

Eventually, Stalin made a speech at a meeting of the commission charged to elaborate a draft theses on the Chinese question. Denying his previous "leftist positions", he emphasized the revolutionary importance of the nationalist armies and put forward openly and for the first time the idea that it was necessary to apply to China the old Leninist slogan of 1905, "Democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry". Moreover, he also held that the Chinese CP should not only continue to remain inside the KMT, but it should also participate in the "national revolutionary government" to come (27).

By that time, however, the tragedy was knocking at the door.

On January 5, 1927 the nationalist government in Canton promulgated a decree which banned the strikes, forbade the workers to carry weapons, and established the compulsory arbitration in any factory dispute. Faced with these counterrevolutionary measures, the Stalinists confined themselves to say that this decree:

"(...) limits the right to strike more than what it is required by the interests of the defense in a period of revolutionary war." (28)

Such a statement adequately expressed the tremendous blindness and irresponsibility of the Comintern's leading staff, which was closing its eyes before the impending danger.

After having crushed two attempts at an insurrection occurred in Shanghai on February 17 and 22, 1927, Chiang proceeded to repress in a blood-bath the third insurrection, which had been successful and resulted in the establishment of a "municipal provisional government" based on armed workers' militias and enjoying the Chinese CP's support. On March 21, the first nationalist troops arrived at the suburbs of Shanghai, which were controlled by proletarian insurgents. The *Pravda* of March 22 enthusiastically proclaimed that "Shanghai's keys have been handed over to Chiang, the national liberator" (29).

On March 23, the Presidium of the IKKI telegraphed to the Chinese CP its congratulations for the victory of Shanghai". Chiang himself arrived in Shanghai on March 26, 1927. On April 12 at dawn he launched the most indiscriminate slaughter against revolutionists that the Chinese history had never seen, thereby destroying any ridiculous theory based upon the presumed revolutionary role of the national bourgeoisie and showing his credentials to imperialism. From that moment on, no revolutionist could deny the counterrevolutionary role, nature, and character of the bourgeoisie in backward countries.

* * *

China was an example of the fact that the struggle for national liberation must always be subordinated to social revolution. Remaining in a united front with the national bourgeoisie implies to discourage revolutionary struggles. To encourage them, on the contrary, means to destroy the united front itself.

As a Soviet journalist wrote in a not-so-much-prophetic article published in the *Novyj Vostok* review late in 1926:

"The fact that the Chinese bourgeoisie,

in the moment in which the revolutionary national movement is developing, 'platonically' sets up a bloc with the proletariat does not change at all the class character of the bourgeoisie and its relations to its antithesis, the proletariat. (...) The Chinese bourgeoisie is ready to 'sympathize' with the popular masses' struggle against foreign capital on the fixed condition that no hindrance will be posed to the exploitation of the proletariat by the Chinese bourgeoisie itself." (30)

Two antitheses cannot remain in the same united front, not even for one single moment. If in spite of all such a front is formed, it will only be a "platonically" one in which the bourgeoisie will hold the predominance in its hands, and the proletariat as a class will be subordinated to the bourgeoisie. In the last analysis, the AIUF is nothing else than a "popular front" in colonial and semi-colonial countries. We can and must apply to it the diagnosis Trotsky made for Spain according to which:

"The theoreticians of the Popular Front do not essentially go beyond the first rule of arithmetic, that is, addition: 'Communists' plus Socialists plus Anarchists plus liberals add up to a total which is greater than their respective isolated numbers. Such is all their wisdom. However, arithmetic alone does not suffice here. One needs as well at least mechanics. The law of the parallelogram of forces applies to politics as well. In such a parallelogram, we know that the resultant is shorter the more the component forces diverge from each other. When political allies tend to pull in opposite directions, the resultant may prove equal to zero.

"A bloc of divergent political groups of the working class is sometimes completely indispensable for the solution of common practical problems. In certain historical circumstances, such a bloc is capable of attracting the oppressed petty-bourgeois masses whose interests are close to the interests of the proletariat. The joint force of such a bloc can prove far stronger than the sum of the forces of each of its component parts. On the contrary, the political alliance between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, whose interests on basic questions in the present epoch diverge at an angle of 180 degrees, as a general rule is capable only of paralyzing the revolutionary force of the proletariat." (31)

"Trotskyists" who still put forward the AIUF policy are thereby re-proposing nothing but a "popular front" for backward countries, as if the objective laws of the class struggle were not valid in those countries. Speaking of united fronts with the class enemy after decades of defeats caused by policies of class collaboration with pseudo-revolutionary national bourgeoisies, means to carry on a POUMist, i.e. Menshevik, policy.

When genuine Trotskyists state that the solution of the problems and the contradictions caused by the bourgeois development of the productive forces is only possible by means of a proletarian dictatorship, this means that they must base themselves upon the unity of the working class and the peasantry as against the repeatedly-tested unity of the national bourgeoisie, the landlords, and imperialism. When genuine Trotskyists say that a national-democratic revolution must not stop at its bourgeois stage but grow into a permanent revolution, this means

that they adopt a frontally antagonist stance toward the national bourgeoisie, and that this position does not allow any concession, any truce. When genuine Trotskyists assert that such a revolution has to become a link in the chain of the world socialist revolution, this means that they seek to sharpen the class confrontation and to intensify it, for the passing of the national bourgeoisie into the imperialist camp is inevitable, it is in the nature of things. It is absurd and childish, therefore, to hope to walk arm-in-arm with the national bourgeoisie within the framework of a serious revolutionary-democratic struggle.

A balance between antagonist classes cannot be kept, and those "revolutionists" who look for it could find it only on condition that they subordinate class conflicts, which are in the nature of things, to class balance, which is contrary to nature. Such "revolutionists" will soon pass into the camp of Menshevism and Stalinism.

In the imperialist epoch, the national bourgeoisie in backward countries is capable to lead not a bourgeois revolution, but its polar opposite, i.e. a bourgeois counterrevolution. An indisputable example of this truth was given once more by the Chinese events from 1937 up to 1949.

Beginning from 1937, peasant armies led by Mao-Tse-tung and Chu-teh formed a "national united front" with bloodthirsty Chiang Kai-shek in order to fight the Japanese invaders. However much Mao strove not to disturb the national bourgeoisie, going even as far as to stop the expropriations of rich landowners in those areas he was controlling, soon Chiang put the struggle against the Japanese in a backseat. Thus in 1939 Chiang's KMT started an attack in order to destroy and dismantle the "red areas" controlled by Maoist peasant armies.

So when one speaks us about the AIUF we cannot but reply: Look at the Chinese events between 1939 and 1949! In that case, and in spite of the honest cooperation which the Chinese CP offered to him (for the second time!), Chiang recognized his main enemy not in the Japanese invaders but in the Mao-led peasant movement. In two cases, therefore, Chiang destroyed the very idea that two classes can coexist within one and the same united front, thus destroying also the stage-ist conception which lies at its basis.

BY WAY OF A CONCLUSION

As we said earlier, the problem facing the Comintern was one to know what role the national bourgeoisie in colonial and semi-colonial countries would have played. Under the stimulus of Zinoviev and Radek, the IV World Congress took for granted the hypothesis Lenin had formulated after the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1911. Pondering on that event, Lenin stated indeed that:

"(...) the East has definitely taken the Western path, (...) new hundreds of millions of people will from now on share in the struggle for the ideals which the West has already worked out for itself. What has decayed is the Western bourgeoisie, which is already confronted with its grave-digger, the proletariat. But in Asia there is still a bourgeoisie capable of championing sincere, militant, consistent democracy, a worthy comrade of France's great men of the Enlightenment and great leaders of the close of the

eighteenth century." (32)

A few months later he returned on this question arguing that:

"Everywhere in Asia a mighty democratic movement is growing, spreading and gaining in strength. The bourgeoisie here is as yet siding with the people against reaction." (33)

Basing himself upon the Chinese events of 1911 which overthrew the "Celestial Empire" and established the republic, Lenin forecasted that the bourgeoisie in Eastern countries would have supported the cause of a truly democratic revolution. But such a forecast turned itself to be groundless.

On the other hand, it was based upon a bad interpretation of the Chinese events of 1911. Lenin assumed that the Chinese bourgeoisie would not have behaved like the Russian bourgeoisie during the revolution of 1905. From the informations he gathered (which were certainly far inadequate), Lenin got the impression that there was in China a revolutionary bourgeoisie which was ready to sweep away the old feudal social order and, together with it, patriarchal and precapitalist relations of production.

Recent historical works based upon first-hand informations and data and more accurate analyses showed the contrary. Let us quote, for example, the opinion of Professor Jean Chesneaux:

"(...) the leaders of the Tang-meng-hui (the KMT's forerunner, Ed.), Sun Yat-sen and Huang Xing, organized several insurrections, and they all failed except the last one which occurred in Wuchang in October 1911. The Empire was overthrown and the republic proclaimed.

"After so many failures, this victory was facilitated by the about-face of the Chinese gentry and the rural notables, who until then had been in solidarity with the Manchus, and who resolved to abandon them after having seen their powerlessness. The gentry had not been appeased by the belated concessions granted by the imperial power which, for example, had created provincial assemblies in 1909: thus in October-November 1911 the gentry supported the republicans. But this intervention of the propertied classes, which sealed the overthrow of the Manchus, made the revolutionists' victory precarious. Sun Yat-sen, elected as president of the republic, was soon forced to give up his seat to Yuan Shi-kai, an ambitious general who enjoyed a retinue which was far more solid than that of the small 'modernist' groups which were supporting the Kuo-min-tang (the new denomination of the Tong-meng-hui). The republic exists only by name, and the old social order is almost unshaken: under Yuan Shi-kai, and under the military commanders who succeeded him in 1916, who rested like him upon the rural notables and the traditional officer-ship, an authoritarian and conservative regime continued to rule China. The expectations for a revival failed to materialize."

"Even if, after the revolution of 1911, the representatives of the state power had changed -- being now more-or-less Westernized intellectuals, professional or mercenary officers (like the 'warlords'), and politicians from moderate parties or from the Kuo-min-tang --, and even if they established relations with the newly-established forms of wealth, nevertheless they remained the representatives of the same interests which had

been defended by the Manchu aristocracy and the Confucian mandarins in the nineteenth century, that is, the interests of the big landowners. The peasants went on facing the ya-men -- the despotic power of the local administration's officers -- and bearing the increasingly heavy yoke of the big landowners, thus remaining subjected to usury and forced to medieval-type services and to the payment of the land annuity." (34)

In sum, the "revolution" of 1911, far from liquidating the old social order, saw the national bourgeoisie, which supported the KMT, agreeing on a tacit compromise with the old feudal classes.

But if Lenin can be acquitted for his mistaken "in-the-heath-of-the-moment forecast", the same cannot be done for Zinoviev and Radek who, at the IV World Congress of the Comintern, recommended the ALUF tactic on the basis of the early Leninist views about the role of the national bourgeoisie in Eastern Asia.

Both Zinoviev and Radek based the Comintern's tactics and strategy for Eastern Asia upon the idea that the native bourgeoisie would have followed the same path of the European bourgeoisie, i.e. the path of the bourgeois revolutions of the seventeenth, the eighteenth, and the nineteenth centuries. This hypothesis, too, was based upon the Leninist expectations of 1908-13 that the Asiatic bourgeoisie was "a worthy comrade of France's great men of the Enlightenment and great leaders of the close of the eighteenth century".

But such an idea turned itself to be false, for events would have shown that the national bourgeoisies, far from imitating the Jacobins of the revolutionary epoch of the bourgeoisie, clinged to the lessons of the bonapartist and pro-fascist regimes of the epoch of senile and decaying capitalism.

A brilliant Dutch historian, Jan Romein, taking up the dynamics of the Asiatic revolutions, rightly remarked that:

"A comparison between the revolutions occurred before the twentieth century and those of our times leads us to conclude that the epochal difference has a decisive importance in this case: the bourgeois revolutions of the first period had time enough to develop, whereas the present ones have soon been followed by a proletarian revolution or, at least, such an eventuality does exist. And this occurs all the more easily insofar as the Asiatic bourgeoisie is weak in itself, in the same way as the Russian and the Chinese bourgeoisies were weak. In the first place, the Asiatic bourgeoisie, even in those countries in which it is still very strong as in India, is numerically weak in relation to the mass of population. Secondly, it is of recent origin in every Asiatic country. Whereas from 1350 to 1750, i.e. about four hundred years ago, the European bourgeoisie had much time to prepare itself, so to speak, to exert the power, and after two more centuries it had the time to exert it without being threatened from 'above' or from 'below', the Asiatic bourgeoisie has had at its disposal, at best, as many decades as they were the centuries granted to the European bourgeoisie." (35)

This historian, who certainly could not be accused of being a Trotskyist, added in his own way another basic argument in favour of the inability of the national bourgeoisie to play a revolutionary role

in the imperialist epoch.

Even if one does not take into account the purely economic side of the question -- which we will deal with later -- it appeared clearly that the national bourgeoisie in almost every colonial and semi-colonial country has had too short a period of time at its disposal to impose itself as the ruling class. While it was taking its first steps, its grave-digger, its antithesis, was already a menacing enemy before it. The national bourgeoisie was unable to achieve the social prestige the European bourgeoisie enjoyed quite well before seizing the power. In colonial and semi-colonial countries there occurred the same phenomenon which marked the decline of the Italian commercial bourgeoisie in the sixteenth century, when the powerful Italian banking and commercial bourgeoisie was compelled (because of reasons which would be inopportune to tackle here) to imitate the feudal classes, i.e. to invest the money it accumulated during an epoch of powerful mercantile expansion in landed properties. In certain cases, this money was even merely squandered.

The chronic weakness of the national bourgeoisies is especially clear in a whole series of backward countries where they were not even able to establish firm state apparatuses in order to hold the working class and the peasant movements at bay. So it is clear that in Asia, and above all in Africa and Latin America, most of the present state apparatuses can stand on their legs thanks only to the direct support of imperialism. How long would states like Zaïre, Saudi Arabia, Honduras or Chile last without the imperialist military aid and the backing of the NATO troops? No more than a few years.

The counterrevolutionary role of the national bourgeoisie in backward countries, therefore, depends not only from its own social and economic weakness but also from the character of the national revolutions which, far from stopping at their bourgeois-democratic stage, have shattered the framework of bourgeois compatibilities although they were not led by genuinely communist forces, but by Stalinist and petty-bourgeois ones. It was such a dynamics to confine the national bourgeoisie to a purely conservative position.

In a way or another, one can state that the national bourgeoisies in colonial and semi-colonial countries played a relatively anti-imperialist role as long as it was a question of breaking the direct oppression of the imperialist West and of fighting for national independence. At that stage, what the national bourgeoisie and intelligentsia wished was that the colonialist powers handed the power over into their own hands. The conflict, with imperialism found its origin precisely into the imperialist resistance to grant national independence. As soon as they succeeded in achieving predominance over the state and the society, these national bourgeoisies took on a counterrevolutionary attitude. On the other hand, it is also true that, faced with the risk of getting independence through a revolutionary process which could well slip out of their hands, the national bourgeoisies were inclined to place themselves under the imperialist armies' protection.

Furthermore, it seems to us that one can recognize in the theses of the IV World Congress of the Comintern the simplistic, and therefore erroneous, idea that the achievement of national independence by itself is a bourgeois-democratic revolution. But, however democratic and non-socialist a national revolution may be, anyway it involves a radical overthrow of the old, pre-capitalist socio-economic order, which means in the first place the liberation of

the peasantry from the yoke of the landed property. But in no case the bourgeoisies in backward countries have seriously carried out the program of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

In this sense, the Indochinese delegate who, from the platform of the VI World Congress of the Comintern in July 1928, maintained that "the national bourgeoisie is a completely parasitic class" (36), was fully right, in the same way as a Turkish delegate, Shakri, was right in protesting explicitly the idea canonized by Bucharin and Manuïlsky, according to which Turkey was a feudal country and Kemal Atatürk represented a progressive factor. For Shakri, on the contrary, the Kemalist bourgeoisie, by attacking the working class, had completely passed into the camp of counterrevolution (37).

* * *

The political role of a given class depends always upon its relation to the process of production, that is, upon the form and the mechanisms through which it appropriates or not the surplus created in the process of production.

In reality, in those feudal countries in which archaic relations of production were dominant, the dawning national bourgeoisie could have been interested in playing a revolutionary role, for its development as a class was depending upon the upsetting in a progressive direction of the pre-capitalist mode of production and of the superstructure comprising it. But, with the beginning of the imperialist penetration, the old, feudal social structure (which was dominant in colonial countries) began to break to pieces. Thus it was precisely the imperialism itself that irreversibly started the coming of the capitalist era in those countries it was placing under its domination.

Since some time it appeared clearly that capitalist relations of production are dominant on a world scale. It does not appear to us that there still exist today proper feudal countries, even though there are nations in which the weight of pre-capitalist social classes and castes could be very heavy (e.g., Iran, Afghanistan, etc.). Therefore, where capitalist relations of production are dominant -- in spite of the fact that they did not become so through a series of bourgeois revolutions as in Europe -- the national bourgeoisie cannot play any revolutionary role whatsoever. It can do nothing but taking care of its business.

On the other hand, asserting that capitalist relations of production are dominant in a given country does not imply at all that the bourgeois productive forces are developed. Thus, for example, despite the absence of an industrialization worthy of that name, countries like Egypt, Indonesia or Ecuador are certainly capitalist social formations.

The assertion that capitalist relations of production are dominant in a given country expounds merely the fact that the fundamental classes which are facing each other there are the hired laborers on one hand, and the bourgeoisie on the other, whereas before the coming of capitalism the basic social antagonism was between the big landowners and the peasant who still provided the landowner with medieval-type services.

Therefore, it is progressive only that national bourgeoisie which takes upon itself the task of carrying out the historical mission of making the capitalist mode of production dominant. This was the case of many European countries between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, as we noted above.

But as far as colonial and semi-colonial countries are concerned, we witnessed such a phenomenon only in exceptional cases. An indisputable example of this is offered by Japan. But precisely the Japanese case prove that the bourgeoisie could upset the old, feudal social order under absolutely exceptional historical circumstances, and above all, because of the absence of a solid and militant proletariat and, therefore, because of the non-existence of the threat that the social upheaval the Japanese bourgeoisie carried out could grow into a socialist direction.

The agrarian question is the key question of every bourgeois-democratic revolution, i.e. of any social progress within the framework of a country dominated by a rural economy. As we stated above, contrary to the French bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century, the national bourgeoisies in backward countries proved themselves unable to carry out an agrarian revolution because of the profound interlacing and the organic connections which united the early nuclei of the urban commercial bourgeoisie to the land aristocracy.

This inability and hostility of the national bourgeoisie to destroy the landed property has been tested and showed by the ruthless struggle it conducted, without solution of continuity, against the peasant rebellions, even when these rebellions were led by an intelligentsia which came mainly from the bourgeois milieu.

The conflict between the urban bourgeoisie and the land aristocracy is not antagonist. These classes have always succeeded in reaching a compromise in order to safeguard their own interests, however different they may be. The urban bourgeoisie and the landowners could well agree on a different division of the surplus despite the fact that they appropriate wealth under different forms.

The fact that in some backward countries the national-bourgeois governments have expropriated the big estates and nationalized the land does not appear to us as contradicting the above-mentioned general rule.

If we take into account two examples, however different they may be -- i.e. Ceylon during the 'Fifties, which was ruled by Bandaranaike's bourgeois Sri Lanka Freedom Party, and Boumedienne's independent Algeria --, we can see that the nationalizations of the land did not liberate at all the peasantry from those very semi-feudal conditions to which it was subjected before. Nor these nationalizations led to the effect desired by those who (even inside the Pabloist International Secretariat) deceived themselves that these measures would have opened up the road to industrialization. They were not proper agrarian revolutions but reforms aimed at a different distribution of wealth among the ruling classes and social groups. And they were also a means -- an "enlightened-absolutist" means, so to speak -- to compel parasitic social strata to invest their money in the industry and the services. Anyway, these attempts were so weak that they failed within a few years. And they failed not only because of the comprador inclination and the parasitic character of the national bourgeoisie, but above all because of the scarcity of available capitals in front of such a mighty task as it is the industrialization of a country by itself. On the other hand, it is attested by many studies that the national bourgeoisie, as a rule, does not make productive investments.

In such situations marked by backwardness and scarcity of resources, the state alone can substitute itself for the bourgeoisie's intrinsic inabilities, thus

making the country take its first steps on the road to industrialization and starting an audacious development of the national productive forces. Countries like China, Northern Korea and, in a certain sense, today's Lybia, saw the state performing those functions which, at least in theory, should have been up to the national bourgeoisie. Thus the state has had to proceed to further lowering the living standards of the masses and to increase, through terrorist methods, the labor productivity. Along this road (which in some respects followed the example of the first two Stalinist five-year plans) the states in these countries succeeded in gathering, at least partially, the wealth which was needed to develop a national industry.

Comparing Kybia or Iraq to deformed workers' states like China, Northern Korea, Vietnam or Cuba, does not mean at all that we are faced with social formations of the same nature. In fact, in the deformed workers' states there occurred an overall liquidation of the bourgeois relations of production, even though this was not in the original intentions of the leaderships. Until one has proof to the contrary, the states of countries like Lybia or Iraq do not rest at all upon the liquidation of the bourgeoisie as a class, even if their economy is almost completely nationalized. But this is a different story.

By the way, it is quite improbable that these states will succeed in definitely launching their countries on the road of industrialization, unless the imperialist system is overthrown on a world scale.

In fact, imperialism stifles the development of backward countries and, if necessary, intervenes militarily in order to obstruct their development. There is no time any longer for the peoples of the "Third World" to industrialize their countries along the capitalist road, and probably, not even along the Stalinist road which is leaking everywhere. As long as imperialism survives, the underdevelopment of backward countries cannot but increase.

This is to be explained, in the first place, through the mechanics of the imperialist relations, that is, through the law of the "uneven exchange", by means of which the imperialist powers (and, in some cases, even the Soviet degenerated workers' state) appropriates the greatest share of the surplus which is created in backward countries and which the latter are forbidden to utilize in order to develop their own industry.

A fruit-tree cannot grow as it should in the shade of a big oak, both because it would not be able to capture the light of the sun it needs in order to come up and because the strong roots of the oak would absorb all the vital mineral salts. Similarly, capitalism in backward countries has not been, and will not be, able to develop itself in the shade of imperialism. The national capitalism of these countries has nothing left but to adapt itself, to grow crippled as a parasitic plant around the imperialist oak's trunk like an ivy or, worse, like a fungus.

* * *

We hope that these remarks will be a contribution to the discussion within the world revolutionary movement (and above all, among revolutionary communists in backward countries, including most of the deformed workers' states) around the character and the nature of the revolution, a problem we commit ourselves to deal with more specifically in the forthcoming issues of *International Trotskyist Correspondence*.

Turin, April 1985

FOOTNOTES

- (1) *Der Erste Kongress der Kommunistischen und Revolutionären Organisationen des Fernen Ostens*, Moskau, Januar 1922, Hamburg 1922 (Our translation); see also: E.H.CARR, *A History of Soviet Russia. The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, vol.3, Harmondsworth 1966, p.520.
- (2) Though Stalinist and non-Stalinist epigones have turned the AIUF policy launched by the IV World Congress of the Comintern into an universally valid line applicable to every backward country, the IKKI, in its "Appeal to the Workers and Peasants of Latin America" (see *Internationale Presse Korrespondenz* No.21, January 31, 1923, p.162) stated that "The bourgeoisie's offensive must be countered with a united front of the proletarian forces". Accordingly, the IKKI called the Latin American workers and peasants on to "conduct your struggle against your own bourgeoisie". Such a struggle should have had to coincide with the struggle against imperialism: "The struggle against your own bourgeoisie will become more and more a struggle against world imperialism, a struggle of every worker against every exploiter".
Interestingly, such a position was based upon the belief that the character taken by the yankee penetration in these countries (loans, investments in the local industrial sector, banks, etc.) was an hindrance to the development of a national capitalism, differently from what was taking place in India and China.
Unfortunately, in the following years, under the pressure of the Stalinist-Bucharinist international leadership, Latin American CPs gave up this position and adopted the policy of the "Bloc of four classes". Thus they began to compare Haya de la Torre's APRA to the Chinese KMT and to define it as a national-revolutionary movement. A few later, Peruvian socialist leader Mariátegui opposed this policy of alliance with the national bourgeoisie and, stressing the differences existing between Latin American and Eastern Asia, pointed out that the native bourgeoisie could do nothing but submit itself to imperialism.
- (3) *Der Erste Kongress...*, op.cit. (our translation).
- (4) L.TROTSKY, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol.1, New York 1972, p.223.
- (5) *Thesen un Resolutionen des IV. Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale*, Hamburg 1922, pp.42-52 (our translation).
- (6) *Ibidem*.
- (7) *Ibidem*.
- (8) R.SCHLESINGER, *Die Kolonialfrage in der Kommunistischen Internationale*, Frankfurt am Main 1970, (Italian edition, p.69; our translation).
- (9) Quoted in E.H.CARR, *The Bolshevik Revolution...*, op.cit., Vol.3, p.303.

- (10) *Ibidem*, pp.473-74.
- (11) *Ibidem*, p.475.
- (12) Quoted in *Ibidem*, p.476.
- (13) *Ibidem*, pp.477-78.
- (14) Quoted in *Ibidem*, p.478.
- (15) Quoted in *Ibidem*, p.479.
- (16) Quoted in *Ibidem*, p.238.
- (17) L.TROTSKY, "Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition" (September 7, 1929), in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, New York 1975, pp.264-65.
- (18) Quoted in T.KARA-MURZA, *Strategiya i Taktika Komintern v Natsionalnokolonialnoi Revoliutsii na primere kitaya*, Moscow 1924, p.112 (our translation).
- (19) *Ibidem*, pp.114-16.
- (20) E.H.CARR, *A History of Soviet Russia. Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929*, Vol.3, London-Basingstoke 1978 (Italian edition, p.112; our translation from Italian).
- (21) Quoted in *Ibidem*, It.ed., p.61 (our translation).
- (22) See *Ibidem*, It.ed., pp.71-72 (our translation).
- (23) Quoted in *Ibidem*, It.ed., p.80 (our translation).
- (24) Quoted in *Ibidem*, It.ed., p.80 (our translation).
- (25) Quoted in *Ibidem*, It.ed., p.86 (our translation).
- (26) *Ibidem*, It.ed., p.86 (our translation).
- (27) See *Ibidem*, It.ed., pp.87-89 (our translation).
- (28) Quoted in *Ibidem*, It.ed., p.95 (our translation).
- (29) Quoted in *Ibidem*, It.ed., p.105 (our translation).
- (30) *Ibidem*, It.ed., p.105 (our translation).
- (31) L.TROTSKY, "The Lessons of Spain. The Last Warning" (December 17, 1937), in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, New York 1973, pp.308-9.
- (32) V.I.LENIN, "Democracy and Narodism in China" (July 15, 1912), in *The National Liberation Movement in the East*, Moscow 1969, p.59 (emphasis in original).
- (33) V.I.LENIN, "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia" (May 10, 1913), in *Ibidem*, pp.83-84 (emphasis in original).
- (34) J.CHESENEAUX, *L'Asie orientale aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, Paris 1966 (Italian edition, pp.95, 102; our translation).
- (35) J.ROMEIN, *De eeuw van Azië*, Leiden 1956 (Italian edition, p.22; our translation).
- (36) Quoted in E.H.CARR, *Foundations of a Planned Economy...*, op.cit., It.ed., p.25 (our translation).
- (37) Quoted in *Ibidem*, It.ed., p.31 (our translation).

In defence of the revolutionary Comintern

Stuart King

The article by Dino Albani on the Anti-Imperialist United Front (AIUF) in *International Trotskyist Correspondence* No. 1, falls into a number of errors both of historical accuracy and of political method. At the root of these errors lies an incorrect understanding of the nature and purpose of the united front tactic, especially in relation to the semi-colonial world.

THE SECOND WORLD CONGRESS

The comrade states the AIUF tactic was "formally adopted for the first time by the CI (Communist International or Comintern - WP) at its Fourth World Congress". While it is true that this is the first time the particular term is used, the Fourth Congress was especially concerned with the United Front; it is incorrect to imply, as the article does, that this was somehow a 'new' political position of the Comintern. In its fundamentals the AIUF tactic was adopted at the Second World Congress on the basis of theses drafted and amended by Lenin. To try and make a political distinction between the theses as adopted at the Second Congress and those passed at the Fourth might save the author the embarrassment of attacking Lenin's political positions, but makes no sense given the clear continuity of political method between the two sets of theses.

Lenin's theses raise the possibility of an "alliance" between the Communist International, and therefore national communist parties, and "national revolutionary movements". Lenin stressed in his opening speech that this was possible because of the fundamental difference between an oppressor and an oppressed nation. The theses declared:

"The Communist International should accompany the revolutionary movement in the colonial and backward countries for part of the way, and should even make an alliance with it, but must unconditionally maintain the independent character of the proletarian movement, be it only in embryo."¹

In Lenin's original formulation he had talked about the CI entering into a "temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries".²

In discussion in the commission, particularly with M N Roy, it was agreed to replace "bourgeois-democratic" with "national-revolutionary" throughout. It was felt that the term bourgeois-democratic blurred the distinction between reformist movements, which sought desperately to compromise with imperialism and were restricting the struggle, and movements which were in open struggle with the imperialists, even though they were led by the bourgeois or petit-bourgeois nationalists (of which today the FSLN in Nicaragua and FMLN in El Salvador are good examples).

Even with those movements with which it was possible to strike a united front against imperialism, there was no question of sowing illusions in their socialist credentials:

"A determined fight is necessary against the attempt to put a communist cloak around revolutionary liberation movements. The C.I. has the duty to support the revolutionary movement in the colonies

only for the purpose of gathering components of the future proletarian parties - communists in fact and not just in name - in all the backward countries and training them to be conscious of their special tasks... of fighting against the bourgeois democratic tendencies within the nation."³

For the Second Congress therefore there were two important conditions for the possibility of an alliance with the bourgeois nationalists: (i) that they were actually leading a struggle against imperialism, and (ii) that they placed no restrictions on the communists organising the workers and peasants in a revolutionary way against the imperialists.

There were two important voices of dissent from this position raised at the Second Congress. One was M N Roy, an Indian revolutionary. The other was Serrati, a representative of the Italian Socialist Party and of Italian 'Maximalism'. Roy believed that it was impossible to seek an alliance with bourgeois nationalists because they were unwilling and incapable of fighting the imperialists. He counterposed to a united front with such movements an alliance with a revolutionary movement of the propertyless peasants and workers, on whom, he argued, the bourgeois nationalists had little or no influence. Roy's theses, presented in commission, were heavily amended by Lenin before being adopted by the Second Congress. For instance, Lenin deleted the following from Roy's original 7th thesis:

"The revolutionary movement in the colonies is essentially an economic struggle. The bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement is limited to the small intermediate stratum which does not reflect popular aspirations. Without active popular support the national emancipation of the colonies will never be attained. But in many countries, especially in India, the masses do not follow bourgeois nationalist leaders, and are advancing to revolution independently of the bourgeois-nationalist movement."⁴

He went on to delete in commission the 10th and 11th theses which included the following position:

"Bourgeois-nationalist democrats in the colonies are striving to set up a free national state, for which the mass of workers and poor peasants are rising up - however unconscious that might be in many cases - against the system that permits such cruel exploitation. Consequently, we have two opposed forces in the colonies. They cannot develop together. Support for the bourgeois-democratic movement would mean encouragement to the promotion of a national spirit, which of course would hamper the awakening of class consciousness in the masses..."⁵

Lenin clearly disagreed with Roy's basic approach to the nationalist movements in the semi-colonies. Roy underestimated the possibilities of the Indian bourgeoisie being pushed into leading militant actions against imperialism in defence of its own interests. To bolster his arguments he dramatically underestimated the degree of influence that the nationalists had over the masses. As in other cases this apparently 'left', in fact sectarian, approach to the united front

soon turned into its opposite. By the mid 1920s, seeing the Indian National Congress under Ghandi leading mass struggles, Roy was declaring the need to turn it into a 'People's Party' along the lines of the Kuomintang.

Serrati also opposed Lenin's position at the Congress, demonstrating again the accuracy of the old adage that sectarianism and opportunism are different sides of the same coin. In arguing why he was not going to vote for the Theses, Serrati declared:

"In general national liberation action undertaken by the bourgeois-democratic groups is not revolutionary action even if it adopts the methods of insurrection. Even in the backward countries the class struggle can only proceed if the independence of the working class is preserved from all its exploiters, even from the bourgeois democrats who call themselves 'revolutionary nationalists'.

The true liberation of the enslaved peoples can only be carried out through the proletarian revolution and the soviet order, and not by a temporary and accidental alliance between the communist parties and the nominally revolutionary bourgeois parties".⁶

Neither Serrati, nor Roy at this time, saw the use of the united front tactic in helping to break the influence of the bourgeois nationalists over the mass movement. Unfortunately, the positions as argued by comrade Albani of the GOR stand closer to the erroneous positions of Serrati and Roy than they do to Lenin and the revolutionary Comintern on this question.

THE FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS

The GOR's article declares:

"under the pressure of Zinoviev, the Fourth Congress of the Comintern proclaimed the need for a united front of the proletariat and the forces of the national bourgeoisie."

We have already shown that this policy was initiated not by Zinoviev but by Lenin at the Second Congress. Further it is inconceivable that the proposed theses for the Fourth Congress were not discussed and agreed by the leadership of the Russian Communist Party including Lenin and Trotsky - so why imply they were somehow the product of Zinoviev? Is the comrade saying Trotsky disagreed with these theses - clearly that was not the case.

What then are comrade Albani's criticisms of the theses? He quotes the following formulation:

"The proletariat supports and itself puts forward partial demands, for example the demand for an independent democratic republic, for abolishing the unequal legal status of women, etc, in so far as the existing relation of forces does not allow it to make the realisation of its soviet programme the immediate task."⁷

This he declares to be:

"the stage-ist conception, of Menshevik origin, which asserts that the existing relationship of forces does not allow communists to put socialist demands on the agenda."

Only the most biased reading of this quote, let alone the theses taken as a whole, could lead one to charge them with "stage-ism" and "Menshevism". The quote used is making the unexceptional point that revolutionaries fight for democratic demands, in as far as the "relation of forces do not allow it to make the realisation of its soviet programme the immediate task". Thus, for example, the demand for a Constituent Assembly can come to the fore in a situation where the realisation of soviets is not an immediate task, as in China after 1927. This is not Menshevism, but Marxist tactics. Indeed if Menshevism informed the theses why do they specifically declare:

"Alliance with the proletariat in the West will clear the way for the international federation of Soviet Republics. For backward countries the Soviet system represents the most painless transitional form from primitive conditions of existence to the advanced communist culture which is destined to replace capitalist methods of production and distribution throughout the world economy."⁸

A theme continued from the Second Congress where Lenin said it was "incorrect to assume a capitalist stage of development is necessary for such peoples (of the East)".⁹ Both formulations are a far cry from the real stage-ism introduced later into the CI by Stalin and Bukharin.

Neither is there any evidence for the argument that the "achievement of national independence" was equated by the theses with "the national-democratic revolution". The theses specifically point out that "even in independent Turkey the working class does not enjoy freedom of association". They call on the communist parties in the colonies and semi-colonies (ie where national 'independence' was granted) to call on the masses "to struggle for national liberation".

Comrade Albani says that the major fault of the theses was to mistake the:

"progressive-in-itself character of a task like national independence for the nature and role of the class which at least on paper was mainly interested in achieving it".

He implies that the CI expected the bourgeoisie to carry out its own democratic programme and to break with imperialism, when in fact the nationalists did the opposite. He says:

"at the basis of the policy (the AIUF - WP) there is precisely the childish expectations that the national bourgeoisie 'would carry out its bourgeois revolution through to the end'."

Did the Communist International really have such "childish expectations" of the bourgeoisie of the colonial and semi-colonial world? Was this the major fault of the theses at the Fourth Congress? To take some examples of the real position outlined in these theses in relation to the nature and likely actions of the bourgeois nationalists:

"That is why the ruling classes among the colonial and semi-colonial peoples are unable to lead the struggle against imperialism in so far as that struggle assumes the form of a revolutionary mass movement." (Thesis II) "The bourgeois and bourgeois agrarian elements begin to turn away from the movement in proportion as the social interests of the lower classes of the people come to the forefront." (Thesis V) "This mobilisation is the more necessary as the indigenous ruling classes are inclined to effect compromises with foreign capital directed against the vital interests of the masses of the people." (Thesis VI)¹⁰

Far from having "childish expectations" the CI issued clear warnings from both Second and Fourth Congresses as to the vacillating and compromising nature of the bourgeois nationalists.

Neither, by the way, did M N Roy "distance himself" at the time from the positions taken at the Fourth Congress (although he did in retrospect, some years afterwards). Indeed he was instrumental in drawing them up as a member of the Eastern Commission. In his passage from 'left' to right, the Fourth Congress caught Roy arguing a communist position and outlining quite clearly the importance of the AIUF:

"We have to develop our parties in these countries in order to take the lead in the organisation of the united front against imperialism. Just as the tactics of the united proletarian front lead to the accumulation of proletarian strength in the Western countries and unmasks and discloses

the treachery and compromising tactics of the Social-Democratic Party by bringing them into active conflict, so will the campaign of the united anti-imperialist front in the colonial countries liberate the leadership of the movement from the timid and hesitating bourgeoisie and bring the masses more actively in the forefront, through the most revolutionary social elements, which constitute the basis of the movement, thereby securing the final victory."¹¹

Here Roy puts his finger on the vital importance of the united front tactic which unfortunately the GOR ignore. It is a method of **breaking the political hold** of the nationalists over the masses. By fighting alongside and in these movements against imperialism, in temporary united fronts around concrete and specific demands and actions, the communists can expose, in struggle, the vacillating and treacherous leadership of the movement, winning the workers and peasants to their side. By abandoning this tactic the GOR would abandon this vital method of communist work.

THE COMINTERN'S PROGRAMME

While we have shown that the development of the AIUF tactic up to 1922 was not informed by the class collaborationist method of the 'Popular Front' which comrade Albani implies, we do not say the Communist International had developed a fully rounded communist strategy and set of tactics for the colonial and semi-colonial world. Its perspectives for the revolutionary struggles in that arena remained flawed by its failure to generalise the lessons of the Russian Revolution with regard to the theory of Permanent Revolution. This should come as no surprise since even the author of this theory, Leon Trotsky, did not think this perspective was applicable to the colonial countries, and did not raise it as an operative guide for revolutionary strategy between 1917 and 1927.

For the CI the struggle for **socialism** in the colonial world, as opposed to the role of the working class in leading the anti-imperialist struggle, was bound up with the socialist revolution in the imperialist heartlands. Trotsky voiced the CI's analysis of the interrelationship between the colonial and metropolitan class struggles in his report on the Fourth World Congress to the Russian Party:

"It is self-understood that the colonies - Asia, Africa... if taken independently and isolatedly, are absolutely not ready for the proletarian revolution. The growth and influence of communist ideas, the emancipation of the toiling masses of the colonies, the weakening of the influence of the nationalist parties can be assured not only by, and not so much by the role of the native communist nuclei as by the revolutionary proletariat of the metropolitan centres for the emancipation of the colonies."¹²

While such a perspective, as we have shown, did not lead to an opportunist application of the united front tactic, its inadequacy as a guide to revolutionary action was to play into the hands of the Stalin faction, who used it as a justification for tying the proletariat to the programme of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists. Nowhere was this more disastrous for the proletariat than in China.

In his enthusiasm to blame the Chinese debacle on the Anti-Imperialist United Front tactic, developed between 1920 and 1922 by the CI, comrade Albani succeeds only in virtually absolving the Stalin faction from responsibility for this tragedy. It is revealing for instance that the Stalin/Bukharin "bloc of four classes" against imperialism is not deemed worthy

of a mention in his account of the failure of the Chinese revolution. This is not seen as important precisely because the GOR's position leads them to see the direction of the Chinese Communist Party between 1923 and 1927 as reflecting not a **break** with the revolutionary tradition of the Comintern but a **continuity**.

Indeed between 1926 and 1928 Trotsky and the Left Opposition were in a political **bloc** with Zinoviev, the person, who according to comrade Albani, was responsible for the 'Popular Front' line in China. Had Trotsky become an opportunist? Or had Zinoviev changed his position? Neither was the case. Trotsky and Zinoviev were able to bloc on the China question because the line of Bukharin/Stalin represented a **fundamental break** with the method of the Anti-Imperialist United Front developed by the CI between 1920 and 1922, not a continuation of it.

This does not mean that the CI committed no mistakes in implementing the united front in the colonial world; it did, as it did in the West. These mistakes could have been corrected, the experience refining the use of the tactic, had the CI not succumbed to bureaucratic centrist leadership first under Zinoviev (1924-26), then more dramatically under Bukharin. The Chinese party was the first to feel these mistakes.

CHINA

In 1922 the small Chinese CP offered a "two party alliance" to the Kuomintang (KMT) following the line adopted at the Second Congress. Sun Yat Sen refused such an alliance but declared that the CCP could join as individual members. Maring (Henk Sneevliet), the first Comintern agent in China, persuaded the party to join despite some opposition among the Chinese communists. Sneevliet clearly had in mind using the same tactic his party had used in Indonesia in relation to an amorphous nationalist movement called Sarekat Islam. Here the ISDV (Indies Social Democratic Association, later the Indonesian CP - PKI) was able to enter the nationalist movement as a bloc retaining its membership, organisation and press as well as its independent activity. As a result of this "bloc from within" tactic the PKI grew rapidly, controlling whole branches of the Sarekat Islam as well as the young trade union movement. It claimed 80,000 members by 1922. Sneevliet thought the same could be done in relation to the KMT, which was just beginning to be influential with the South China labour movement especially with the seamen. As he declared in **Communist International**:

"we have as our task to keep the revolutionary nationalist elements with us and to drive the whole movement to the left."¹³

The Chinese delegates to the Second Congress put more emphasis on entering the KMT to split the masses from its bourgeois leadership rather than pushing the party leftwards.

The question as to whether the young CCP should have entered the KMT within a year of its foundation was a tactical question. The decision was obviously influenced by the enormous advantages of being within a very amorphous and unformed nationalist movement which was drawing in large numbers of workers, intellectuals and even peasants following the mass upsurge against imperialism of the May 4th movement. While it seems that Trotsky opposed the entry in the case of China he did not reject such a tactic in principle.

For Trotsky the key questions were: the level of differentiation of class forces, ie to what extent was the working class involved in its own struggles as an independent force, and the ability of the developing communist parties to win the leadership of such struggles. Thus he argued:

"The participation of the CCP in the KMT was perfectly correct in the period when the CCP was a propaganda society which was only preparing itself for future independent political activity but which at the same time sought to take part in the ongoing national liberation struggle."¹⁴)

Thus like the entry tactic into Social Democracy it was seen as a tactic of limited duration, but even when calling for a withdrawal from the KMT Trotsky did not, as comrade Albani claims, reject the united front tactic. In the same article he argues:

"The drawing of organisational lines, which inevitably flows from class differentiation, does not rule out but, on the contrary, pre-supposes - under existing conditions - a political bloc with the KMT as a whole or with particular elements of it, throughout the Republic or in particular provinces, depending on circumstances."¹⁵

While the form of the united front with the KMT was a tactical question its nature was not. Both the Second and Fourth Congresses had been absolutely clear that within the united front the political independence of the proletarian movement had to be safeguarded at all costs. Certainly this would have made the united front more difficult to achieve and necessarily more episodic, restricted to specific issues. This was not how the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) came to view the tactic.

Already in 1923 the tactic was being given an opportunist content, restricting the demands and activity of the CCP so as not to offend the KMT. The position of the Comintern on the nature of the coming revolution in China helped to justify such restrictions on the CCP's activity. Adolphe Joffe, the Soviet diplomat, issued a joint statement with Sun Yat Sen in January 1923, declaring that **"conditions do not exist here for the successful establishment of socialism or communism"** and that the **"chief and immediate aim of China is the achievement of national independence."**¹⁶)

The ECCI resolution issued in the same month which approved the entry into the KMT, while declaring that the party must retain its political independence, went on to advise:

"in this work the CCP should appear under its own colours, distinct from any other political group, while avoiding any conflict with the national-revolutionary movement."¹⁷

Of course 'avoiding any conflict' with the bourgeois-nationalist KMT was impossible if the CCP was to defend the interests of the working class or even lead an intransigent and uncompromising struggle against the imperialists as the KMT leadership consistently sought compromises with US and British imperialism.

Under the direction of Michael Borodin, who came to China in the Autumn of 1923 not as a CI delegate but as an advisor to the KMT responsible to the politburo of the CPSU, the strictures to maintain political independence were quickly forgotten. Far from using the united front to win over the masses in the rank and file of the KMT to the communist party, Borodin set about subordinating the CCP and its policies to what was acceptable to the KMT leadership. By 1925/26 Borodin was arguing against radical agrarian reforms which involved "confiscation of private property" in view of the "mixed class composition" of the KMT. The KMT was itself reorganised and armed by the Soviet emissaries. Borodin himself drafted a new programme for the KMT, and it was organised along "democratic centralist" lines. Far from aiming to split the KMT, new life was breathed into the party. It now carried the open approval of Russian revolutionaries as the leader of the Chinese anti-imperialist struggle.

The tactic being pursued in China was no longer the Anti-Imperialist United Front - a temporary alliance of the communist party and the bourgeois nationalists. To

justify the political subordination of the CCP to the KMT, this party was no longer classified as a "bourgeois-nationalist" party but declared a "Workers and Peasants Party". From 1924 the CPSU leadership, including Zinoviev, argued that such parties could lead the anti-imperialist struggles and that the CPs should actively form them. In India from 1924, M N Roy advocated the formation of such a "Peoples Party" within Congress, first alongside the CP and later (1926) as an alternative to it. By 1926 the "Workers and Peasants parties" had become a bloc of four classes, parties of the "workers, peasants, intellectuals and urban democracy" (i.e. the bourgeoisie). The Bukharin/Stalin faction had turned the united front into a real 'Popular Front' subordinating the working class to the programme of the bourgeois nationalists.

TROTSKY DOES NOT REJECT THE AIUF

Trotsky opposed this policy not because he opposed the Anti-Imperialist United Front, but because he opposed the opportunist perversion of it by the centrists. Again comrade Albani is wrong when he implies that after the Chinese events Trotsky abandoned the Anti-Imperialist United Front tactic. Certainly the slogan was not used, and it is little wonder given that the meaning that the CI had just given it in the Chinese events was the subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie, i.e. class collaboration. But the tactic and possibility of a united front with nationalists, of both bourgeois and petit-bourgeois variety, in struggle against imperialism, that Trotsky never abandoned.

We have already pointed out that even after Chiang's first coup against the communists (March 1926) Trotsky called for the maintenance of a 'political bloc' with sections of the KMT. He emphasised, however, that these could not be the "vague and formless" alliances that existed in the KMT, but could be based **"only on strictly defined and clearly stated agreements"**.¹⁸ Again in *Summary and Perspectives of the Chinese Revolution* written in June 1928 after the Shanghai massacre and the crushing of the proletariat's organisations by the KMT, Trotsky re-affirms the validity of the united front:

"It goes without saying that we cannot renounce in advance such rigidly delimited and rigidly practical agreements as serve each time a quite definite aim. For example, such cases as involve agreements with the student youth of the KMT for the organisation of an anti-imperialist demonstration, or of obtaining assistance from Chinese merchants for strikers in a foreign concession, etc . . . The sole 'condition' for every agreement with the bourgeoisie, for each separate, practical, and expedient agreement consists in not allowing either the organisations or the banners to become mixed directly or indirectly for even a single day or a single hour . . ."¹⁹

Clearly here Trotsky does not limit the united front only to questions of 'military blocs' against the imperialists or the Warlords. Indeed such a position makes a non-Marxist division between 'politics' and 'war' - "war is the continuation of politics by other means".

Neither is it correct to try and use Trotsky's writings on Spain to justify a rejection of the Anti-Imperialist United Front as comrade Albani does. Spain was an imperialist country, therefore Trotsky was quite correct to say the bourgeoisie's and proletariat's basic interests **"diverge at an angle of 180 degrees"**.²⁰ Trotsky took Bukharin to task in his critique of the CI's draft programme for proclaiming that the Chinese bourgeoisie had **"definitely gone over to the counter-revolutionary camp"**.

²¹ Why? Because Trotsky recognised that this could only be the case where the bourgeoisie's **"fundamental class aspirations are satisfied either by revolutionary means or in another way (for instance, the Bismarkian**

way)".²² 1) As long as this was not the case, as long as imperialism continued to divide and exploit the country, stunt the possibility of the bourgeoisie achieving its basic interests, then there was always the possibility of a section of this class "supporting the revolution again, or at least flirting with it."²³

Therefore the GOR are completely wrong when they say that the lesson Trotsky drew from the Chinese events was to reject the Anti-Imperialist United Front:

"because any hopes that the bourgeoisie could march together with communists against imperialism . . . revealed themselves to be a completely reactionary utopia."

Trotsky indeed saw the possibility of "marching together" with the bourgeois nationalists in "agreements for specific occasions concluded for practical reasons and rigidly confined to practical aims".²⁴

And this is precisely what Trotsky meant by a united front rather than a "lasting political bloc". The GOR's article makes much of the fact that a united front is impossible with the bourgeoisie:

"Remaining in a united front with the national bourgeoisie implies to discourage revolutionary struggles. To encourage them on the contrary means to destroy the united front itself."

Yes of course the bourgeoisie, and petit-bourgeois forces, will demand that communists subordinate the demands of the workers, curtail their struggles, etc. That is precisely why such united fronts would be episodic "confined to practical aims".

If anything it is the GOR which interprets the united front in an opportunist manner:

"Let us repeat again that a military bloc does not imply at all the setting up of a united front: two classes facing each other cannot stipulate a non-belligerence treaty."

And earlier, attacking groups "claiming to be Trotskyist which mistake the policy of temporary alliances with bourgeois national forces for a proper united front". Since when has the united front been anything else than a "temporary alliance"? Since when has a united front been a "non-belligerence treaty"? If the GOR holds a position that the united front is a lasting political bloc in which the participants agree to sink their public differences, this would indeed be a deeply opportunist interpretation of the united front.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

The real lessons Trotsky drew from the Chinese events was the applicability of the theory of Permanent Revolution to the colonial and semi-colonial world. While Trotsky denounced the opportunist application of the united front in China and called for the withdrawal of the CCP from the KMT, he did not differ with the Russian Party on the bourgeois nature of the coming revolution in China. He rightly characterised the Bukharin/Stalin approach to the Chinese revolution as 'right-Menshevik' i.e. they believed that via the KMT the bourgeoisie, or at least an important section of it, would lead the revolution against the warlords and imperialists. The workers' role was seen as aiding this struggle for a bourgeois democratic China and therefore their own demands would have to wait, because if raised in the struggle it would 'divide' the anti-imperialist movement.

Trotsky and Zinoviev counterposed to this perspective one based on the position developed by Lenin between 1905 and April 1917. While this perspective emphasised the leading role of the working class in alliance with the peasantry and placed no reliance on the compromising bourgeoisie to carry out even a democratic revolution, it remained tied to the perspective of a bourgeois revolution in China:

Above all it must be made clear to the vanguard of the Chinese proletariat that China has no pre-

requisites whatever economically for an independent transition to socialism, that the revolution now unfolding under the leadership of the KMT is a bourgeois-national revolution, that it can have as its consequence, even in the event of a complete victory, only the further development of the productive forces on the basis of capitalism."²⁵

They recognised however that a victory for the KMT would mean an immediate shift to the right, an attack on the workers and peasants and a search for a compromise with the imperialists - unless the workers took the lead in the struggle. This meant fighting to build soviets which "alone will open up further prospects of a Revolutionary Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry".²⁶ Thus within the Anti-Imperialist United Front the struggle revolved around holding the left-KMT to its democratic promises, mobilising the workers and peasants around democratic rather than socialist demands.

By the Autumn of 1927, Trotsky had come to the conclusion that this perspective played into the hands of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois forces as well as their Menshevik cheerleaders, and bore little relation to the actual developments in the class struggle. As the workers took the lead in the struggle against the imperialist puppet government in the towns, they were faced with the sabotage of the bourgeoisie, itself closely tied to imperialism and terrified of the workers' actions. Of necessity in a situation of civil war this meant taking over the major industries and transport. In the countryside the procurement of food and satisfying the landless peasants meant the expropriation of the landlords and kulaks.

The landholder as a rule was the urban bourgeoisie which meant the agrarian revolution itself took on an anti-bourgeois character in China. Trotsky came to the conclusion that: **"The Chinese revolution at its new stage will win as a Dictatorship of the Proletariat or not at all"**.²⁷ The slogan of the "Democratic Dictatorship" had become a fiction, something that was impossible to achieve and which could only lead in the direction of Menshevism. It had become a "reactionary force" in the revolution, which needed to be replaced by the slogans of Soviet Power, the Workers and Peasants government, and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

CONCLUSION

We believe the GOR are wrong to see the Anti-Imperialist United Front tactic as the progenitor of the Popular Front. We believe the culprit in reality was "the bloc of four classes", aiming to carry out a separate independent, self-sufficient stage - the 'national revolution'. A revolution with a bourgeois democratic character and whose governmental goal was a coalition between the bourgeoisie and the workers' parties (with the stolen label of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry). This was a clear reversion to Menshevism.

None of this is present in the theses or deliberations of the Fourth Congress quite simply because the early CI was unclear as to governmental slogans and to the character of the anti-colonial/anti-imperialist struggle. They were clear enough that where a non-proletarian force was fighting imperialism and its local agents then the CP had to support it. But without the concept of a bourgeois revolution, within which the working class won for itself the leading role and which 'grew over' into the latter's seizure of power supported by an alliance with the peasantry - that is, Permanent Revolution - the CI had neither a clear perspective nor governmental slogans.

This vacuum was filled by Stalin and Bukharin with a right-centrist and then a counterrevolutionary content. In combat with this - on the battlefield of the Chinese Revolution - Trotsky reformed the theory of Permanent Revolution.

Trotsky never used the term 'Anti-Imperialist United Front' again - perhaps because he felt it had been soiled by association with the bloc of four classes etc; but he certainly advocated the united front against imperialism - including with bourgeois forces (with the Kuomintang against Japanese imperialism).

Like Trotsky we are keener to defend and use tactics rather than words. What we believe is necessary in countries oppressed and attacked by imperialism and its agents is a fighting bloc of all social forces and their parties willing and able to resist. This may be extremely episodic - for a single demonstration or a rally - or it may be a military bloc. Our position is that it is incorrect in non-imperialist countries to exclude the bourgeoisie on principle. Indeed where the bourgeoisie has mass influence amongst the oppressed classes (and where has it not?) refusal to offer the united front is to strengthen that influence not undermine it.

Of course, nine tenths of the bourgeoisie for nine tenths of the time will be an agent of imperialism against its own people. But there is that section of the bourgeoisie that deludes the masses with anti-imperialist rhetoric. Here the united front, providing it fulfils all the conditions of the united front - a clear, precise and limited object of real struggle with no confusion of banners (marching separately and striking together) - can

expose the bourgeois party and win over its mass base. This tactic is not qualitatively different from the united front that could be used in the case of an oppressed nationality (which also has a bourgeoisie).

Of course in reality - in terms of united fronts actually struck by the working class and carried through - the essential classes are firstly the peasantry, secondly the oppressed urban classes (petit-bourgeoisie, sub-proletariat). These classes fight imperialism not just rarely and episodically like the national bourgeoisie or sections of it, but vigorously (and, under proletarian influence and leadership, consistently). Therefore from the outset an AIUF is actually aimed at winning them. After all these classes can be won to support a proletarian seizure of power.

If what the GOR are wary of is the idea of the AIUF as a strategy in the way that the OCI tradition has used it, then we agree. It would be completely opportunist to present the AIUF as a constant fixed bloc of parties with constantly changing objectives, and even as an electoral bloc or prospective government. Here the reservation of places for the bourgeois parties and the limitation of its programme to 'anti-imperialist' measures (i.e. only hitting 'foreign' capital) converts this false AIUF into a genuine Popular Front.

1. Second Congress of the Communist International New Park 1977 vol 1 p182
2. V I Lenin. Collected Works Lawrence and Wishart vol 31 p150
3. Second Congress op.cit. p182
4. A Reznitsov. The Comintern and the East Progress Publishers (Moscow) 1984 p62
5. Ibid. p63
6. Second Congress op.cit. p171
7. J Degras (ed) The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents Frank Cass and Co. Ltd 1971 vol 1 p390
8. Ibid. p388
9. Second Congress. op.cit. p113
10. J Degras op.cit. pages 385, 388 and 390
11. Abridged Report of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International Communist Party of Great Britain 1923 p211
12. L Trotsky. The First Five Years of the Communist International Monad 1974 vol 2 pp316-17
13. Communist International September 1922

14. L Trotsky. On China Pathfinder (New York) 1976 p114
15. Ibid. p116
16. Quoted in Harold Isaacs. The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution Stanford University Press 1961 p62
17. J Degras op.cit. vol 2 p6
18. L Trotsky. The Third International After Lenin Pathfinder (New York) 1972 p168
19. Ibid. p176
20. L Trotsky. The Spanish Revolution (1931-39) Pathfinder p309
21. L Trotsky. The Third International . . . op.cit. p176
22. Ibid. p176
23. Ibid. p176
24. Ibid. p169
25. L Trotsky. On China op.cit. p142
26. Ibid p155
27. Ibid p269

Getting through the dog days

Dave Jenkins reviews

The Left Opposition in the US 1928-1931

James P Cannon, Writings and Speeches
Monad Press (1985) £4.95 pbk 446pp

The Communist League of America 1932-1934

James P Cannon, Writings and Speeches
Monad Press (1985) £7.95 pbk 439pp

The history of American Trotskyism in the 1930s is of singular importance to Trotskyists who are today struggling to build revolutionary organisations. James P - Cannon, the founder and long-time leader of the American Trotskyists provided a basic outline of that history in his 1944 book *The History of American Trotskyism*. The two volumes under review here, published in 1981 and 1985 respectively (referred to hereafter as Volumes I and II), are priceless supplements to that work.

Taken together the volumes chart the history of the Communist League of America (CLA) from the Communist Party's expulsion of Cannon and a small group of sympathisers in October 1928 to the formation of the Workers Party of the United States in December 1934. The speeches, documents and articles from the CLA's paper, *Militant* (nothing to do with today's British Militant Tendency) provide a clear-headed Marxist evaluation of the American labour movement - its unions and its largest party, the Stalinist Communist Party USA (CP).

Here we are treated not simply to the well argued case for internationalism, party and programme, democratic centralism, the policy of the united front and more besides (invaluable supplements to any Marxist educational reading list). We are also given an insight into the internal life of a fighting propaganda group, into its discipline, morality and party spirit.

We are able to see clearly the many personal sacrifices made without complaint, by its members. The words and deeds of the cadres of the CLA are as much an inspiration today as they proved to be 50 years ago.

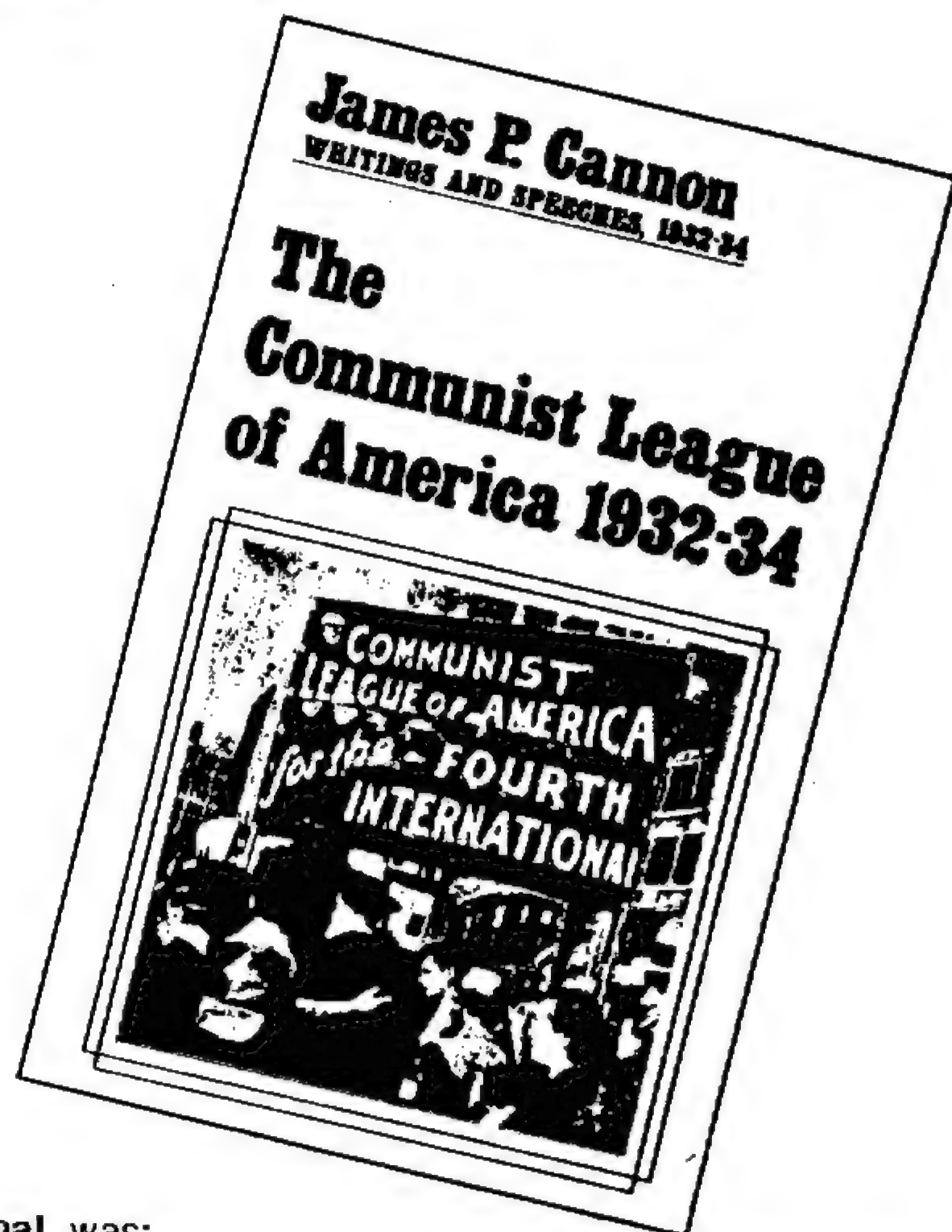
These cadres were inspired by the struggle of Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition against the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International. What united them was the programme of revolutionary internationalism.

Rescuing the communist programme from its Stalinist falsifiers and applying that programme in practice, in the class struggle, could not be done all at one go. The CLA had to undergo stages of party building.

The CLA realised that definite tasks had to be fulfilled during particular stages of party building. In August 1939 the *New International*, the theoretical organ of the Socialist Workers Party (the name of the American Trotskyist organisation from 1938) reviewed these stages.

The first stage of the process - as a faction in the CP - was identified with principally programmatic tasks, "its chief activities are analytic and programmatic". The second stage - the transition of the CLA from what we would call a fighting propaganda group into "the nucleus of the mass party of the future" - involved a fight with any trace of sectarianism inherited from the first stage. It involved the building of an "enlarged propaganda group" intervening in the class struggle whenever possible.

The final stage of growth identified by the *New*



International was:

"transforming an enlarged propaganda group (the end product of the second stage, which began with an opposition faction) into a mass party through direct intervention into the mass movement."

However, in remembering the SWP's words on stages of party building, we must never be schematic. A too rigid schema along these lines would undoubtedly lead to sectarian sterility. The *New International* warned against schematism thus:

"The stages in the development of a revolutionary party do not follow merely from an idea that pops into someone's head or from exclusively internal developments in the revolutionary movement itself. Rather are they the responses to great historical events, which demand a corresponding change in conscious politics."

The responses of the CLA to great events show us the necessary antidotes to sectarian schematism and opportunist impatience alike on the question of party building.

The two volumes under review deal with the earlier stages of the CLA's development. Hence their burning relevance to the small forces of revolutionary Trotskyism today who face a similar problem of programmatic re-elaboration, to rescue communism not only from Stalinists but also from the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International (FI).

A DIFFICULT BEGINNING

Shortly after his expulsion from the CP for the 'crime' of Trotskyism, Cannon wrote to Albert Glotzer, a CP comrade in Chicago, enclosing part of Trotsky's suppressed "Draft Programme of the Communist International: A criticism of fundamentals". In his letter, Cannon tells Glotzer, "I have the zeal of the disciple". Of course, this was no blind faith. As he explained to Glotzer:

"The only thing that is really important is to be right, to be sure of oneself, to know the reasons for a position from all sides. Everything else follows from this". (Vol 1 p58 Cannon's emphasis)

Trotsky's draft, accidentally discovered by Cannon at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and smuggled out of Russia, had a profound impact on him as these lines attest. Nothing else could explain why Cannon, a faction leader in the faction-ridden CP, gave up his comfortable CP office and embarked on the dangerous course of fighting for Trotskyist leadership of the Stalinized Party. In a later reminiscence he wrote:

"What the hell - better men than I have risked their heads and their swivel chairs for truth and justice".
(The First Ten Years of American Communism)

On October 27th, 1928, the first issue of **Militant** was published with the headline, "For the Russian Opposition". This was the statement by Cannon and other leading CP members, Max Shachtman and Martin Abern, to the meeting of the Political Committee which expelled them. This document was a rounded critique of Stalinism's errors in the USSR, in the Soviet Party, in China, Britain and, of course, in America. The document revealed its authors' grasp of Trotskyism and their ability to apply it in the struggle in the American party.

The early issues of **Militant** were almost exclusively addressed to the CP membership. They pounded away at Stalinism's criminal errors week in and week out. Their reward was the slow accumulation of cadre. So alarmed were the CP leaders by Cannon's activities that they set about trying to silence him and his followers by the methods of gangsterism.

On December 10th, two women comrades selling the **Militant** were denounced as 'counter-revolutionary prostitutes' and punched by Stalinist thugs. In the same month Cannon's home was burgled and lists of contacts and documents stolen. A vile slander campaign in the **Daily Worker**, the CP's main newspaper, was accompanied by hoodlum attempts at breaking up Opposition meetings.

But the young CLA weathered the storm, winning recruits and, by means of the united front with members of the Wobblies and non-party workers around the demands for free speech and against violence in the labour movement, it was soon able to defend its meetings. Recalling those early scrapes Max Shachtman wrote:

"Literally scores of party hoodlums, mobilised that very evening at party headquarters and equipped with blackjacks, knives, leadpipes and other subtle political arguments, broke into the hall to terrorise the audience and the speakers . . . (but) . . . groups of sturdy, valiant and resolute militants - female as well as male! - drummed some wholesome homilies into the skulls of the hooligans".

EXTERNAL FACTION

In the opening months of the struggle in the party Cannon and his followers were filled with optimism, expecting that their expulsions **"will meet resistance from the worker communists in the ranks"**. But while they were joined by a hundred or so good cadres, vilification in the party press and the threat of expulsion hanging over any party member who dared even to talk to the "counter-revolutionaries" cut them off from the ranks.

Moreover, wider political developments in the Comintern and in America were working to isolate them from the communist workers and the whole class. Stalin, after five years in alliance with the right-wing bloc around Bukharin and Rykov against Trotsky, turned about face after the defeat of the Left Opposition and Trotsky's exile. In 1928 the announcement of the 'Third Period' (the supposed 'final crisis' of capitalism) inaugurated an ultra left turn. The Red Front took the place of the united front.

Social democracy became social fascism. In America the right-wing leadership of Lovestone and Pepper was expelled and replaced by William Z Foster's faction (the Z stood for Zig-Zag according to Cannon). In the Crisis

of the CP (Vol 1 p140) Cannon explained at some length the nature and origins of the split and he underlined the real role of the Trotskyists in analysing the dangers of the right wing. Throughout these years Cannon had the measure of these men without principles, for whom politics was a passport to a career as a functionary.

Yet the split with the right did present problems. It was Stalin, after all, who had acted against the right wing. Had not Trotsky's closest collaborators, including Radek, realised this and rejoined the fold? Was it not Stalin's Five Year Plan which was producing rapid growth in the USSR while capitalism slumped internationally and in America threw 25 million out of work. Furthermore it was the 20,000 and more strong CPUSA which was organising the unemployed and whose red unions, the rank and file felt sure, held the key to the future. The Trotskyists, whose small size and poor implantation in the class prevented them from having anything other than a 'circle' existence, could be passed off by the bureaucratic apparatus as quibblers at best and counter-revolutionaries at worst.

Against this background the **Militant** report of the Founding Conference of the CLA declared:

"The Communist League will carry on a program of independent activities in the class struggle and will also continue to work as a faction within the party".-
(Vol 1 p284)

The orientation to the CP was dictated principally by international considerations. The Comintern's fall into the camp of counter-revolution was still ahead. And as Cannon stressed, in America:

"we have to recognise that the great bulk of revolutionary workers who play an active role in the class struggle today are in the party, and around the party". (Vol 1 p284)

FIGHTING PROPAGANDA GROUP

The early CLA was, not by choice but by necessity, a fighting propaganda group. It could not skip over this stage and become a "mass" organisation for two simple reasons. First, its resources were tiny and did not permit it. Secondly, before addressing the masses it needed to be clear what to address them with, with what programme. Of course, as a fighting propaganda group it intervened in the working class whenever and wherever it could. But it did not delude itself with the idea that these interventions constituted mass work.

However there was one man - Albert Weisbord - who entertained grand illusions about the possibility of doing mass work. He came back to the States from a private visit to Trotsky and derided the CLA's 'propagandism'. It is worth noting, however, that he was never a member of the CLA, preferring his own 'mass' organisation (13 strong).

Nevertheless, Weisbord had a couple of supporters in the CLA and, besides that, had just visited the 'Old Man'. He had to be taken seriously. In the debate that the CLA granted him, Cannon gave a first class definition of mass work, justified the CLA's orientation and rubbished Weisbord's pretensions:

"By mass work we mean prepared, planned and developed activity to set masses of workers in motion along lines which will strengthen their consciousness. We do not mean spectacular stunts which leave nothing behind; we do not mean putsches . . . In short, we are in no way opposed to general activity in the class struggle; we only refuse to accept an opportunist formula for it; and we refuse to alter our conception of the main task of the Opposition at the moment - propaganda to win over the workers' vanguard".
(Vol 1 pp309-10)

And in what did this propaganda consist? Unlike the small forces grouped within the Movement for a Revolutionary

Communist International today, they had the benefit of proximity to and a direct link with the revolutionary Comintern, i.e. its first four Congresses, through the programmatic work of the Left Opposition. The great class battles fought on the international arena in the 1920s were still fresh in the minds of workers. The sections of the International Left Opposition (ILO) sought to give concrete answers to the problems created by Stalinism in its approach to these questions. The theory of 'socialism in one country' was subjected to withering criticism. As well as lengthy tracts in the *Militant*, the CLA promoted Trotsky's *The Real Situation in Russia* (1928) and *Permanent Revolution* (1931). And despite their meagre resources, they published *Communism and Syndicalism* and *Problems of the Chinese Revolution* as well as a number of pamphlets.

The CLA thus faced the tasks of popularising and applying the communist programme. It did not face the problem of re-elaborating that programme to the same degree as revolutionaries do today, 35 years after the collapse of the FI into centrism.

Much of their innovative work as propagandists was, as a consequence, around the application of programmatic questions to the American terrain. Their task was to develop the programme through focusing it on the struggle of American workers - to 'Americanise' it as Cannon was fond of saying. And much of this took the form of a polemic with the Stalinists against the latter's perversion of the united front tactic at home, particularly, though not exclusively on the pivotal question of the trade unions.



James P. Cannon

PROPAGANDA TASKS

In the early 1930's the American trade unions were in crisis. Against the backdrop of increasing unemployment (3.2% to 25% between 1929 and 1933), membership of the main trade union confederation, the AFL, was falling (from 4 million in 1920 to 2.5 million in 1933). The unions were organised along narrow craft lines. They organised only the most privileged sections of the class - the mass of unskilled workers were excluded. They were dominated by reactionary 'labour statesmen' who consistently strove to operate the unions in a class collaborationist way as a service for the bosses in return for pitiful 'reforms'. In 1926/27 the leaders had purged the unions of radicals and periodically carried out red-baiting exercises for the bosses, particularly when workers took action.

In industry craft divisions had been much modified by the introduction of mass production systems and new technology. The situation had long cried out for industrial unions and a number of reform movements had grown up in the AFL as well as some breakaways. Then along came the Stalinists with their new red unions organised on industrial lines, absolutely counterposed to the AFL whose reformist members were branded as 'social fascists' and 'class traitors'.

In a series of articles in the *Militant*, Cannon took up the critique of the CP's ultra-leftism and elaborated the tactics necessary to advance the workers' class interests and enhance communist leadership:

"The new union movement as a whole, inoculated with the Foster medicine, is reeling like a victim of poison moonshine. What is the matter?

Like the left-wing organisations in all spheres of labor activity, this great potential movement of new unionism is registering the ruinous effects of the internal crisis of the Communist Party. The appointed party leaders carry over into the mass organisations the same foul practices which signalise their rule in the party. They set as their first task the control of the new unions, and they effect this control by methods that insult proletarian intelligence as they offend proletarian morality". (Vol 1 p221)

Instead what was necessary was:

"a struggle to make the new unions democratic organisations in reality, and not merely in hypocritical declarations. They must function as self-sufficient bodies fiercely determining their own course, working out their own rules and selecting their own leaders,"

because:

"leadership of the masses cannot be 'captured without their knowledge or consent'".

And while the job of building new industrial unions was the primary task, rather than turn their backs on the workers organised in the old unions:

"What is needed is a two-sided policy of strengthening the new unions and simultaneously working within the old unions, with a simple objective; to unite the workers on a broader basis under the left-wing banner." (Vol 1 p279)

In these articles, Cannon returns again and again to the question of the united front. For, as he put it:

"In America there were only a few thousand scattered Communists among millions of politically indifferent and reactionary workers. The key to the unity and consolidation of the new unions, to the problem of leadership and the expansion of revolutionary influence, is combination of the revolutionary with the progressive minded workers."

The correct method, programme and estimation of the struggle by the Trotskyists was not translated into growth in these early years. The generalised retreat in the labour movement had been punctuated by class battles sure enough. But these had gone down to defeat. And the small forces of the CLA continued to be isolated

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from them, and often obstructed from even minimal participation in them by the CP. They were prevented from proving in action their abilities as class fighters.

GROWTH OF FACTIONALISM

Cannon called these "the dog days of the opposition". While a few CP militants were recruited, the main influx of members were:

"petty-bourgeois minded people who couldn't stand any kind of discipline, who had either left the CP or had been expelled from it, wanted, or rather thought they wanted to become Trotskyists. Some of them joined the New York branch and brought with them that same prejudice against discipline in our organisation". (The History of American Trotskyism.)

This was unfortunately fertile soil for the growth of personal cliques and apolitical factionalism. Frustration gave rise to conflict. The main focus of this internal conflict in the early thirties was a clash between Cannon and Max Shachtman, *Militant's* editor (a clash that was repeated, but with greater political substance in 1939/40 in the faction fight over the class character of the USSR).

Shachtman unilaterally walked off the job as editor in October 1931 to visit Europe. This was symbolic of his petit-bourgeois individualism and contempt for party discipline. While in Europe he had invariably sided with rightist opposition groups in the sections of the ILO. Further, he did so while keeping a monopoly of information over the sources of the various disputes and so keeping the CLA leaders in the dark.

His activities in the CLA on his return were equally factional. While often formally voting for resolutions and positions, Shachtman would return to his base in the New York branch and undermine them. He also offended the spirit as well as the letter of party discipline. While many low-paid or unemployed comrades raised finance for field-workers or international delegations, Shachtman and his followers more often than not boycotted such endeavours.

Of course the fact that Shachtman's documents from this struggle are not available makes a final passing of judgement in the dispute difficult. A split in 1932, in the absence of a clear political basis for one, would have been unpardonable.

Cannon endeavoured at all times to tease out any political differences of programme and perspective that lay behind Shachtman's factional sniping, and to make these clear and intelligible to the whole of the CLA.

And he was just as anxious not to lightly contemplate doing without the services of talented comrades. In a letter to Hugo Oehler in April 1932 Cannon wrote:

"You will not find us unwilling to consider a conciliation amongst comrades, or the re-establishment of personal relations which permit collaboration, once this basis for it has been established by the political decision of this organisation. We are not anxious to dispense with any of the forces of the League; we do not disparage the abilities of the comrades, or deny the value of the contributions they have made up till now; the personal aspect of the struggle comes entirely from the other side". (Vol 2 p106. Our emphasis)

While it is possible to remonstrate with Cannon on occasion for being a little quick in anticipating a split and for his use of organisational manoeuvres (such as co-option and the proposed ban on recruiting petit-bourgeois elements for six months), his perspectives for the League were right. In a nutshell Cannon was aiming to prepare the League for a turn to mass work and saw the habits, disputes and behaviour of the forces within Shachtman's faction as a barrier.

At the same time the Cannon leadership group redoub-



led their efforts, at the cost of enormous personal sacrifice, to ensure that the CLA's perspectives were carried out and that their message would reach the advanced sections of an awakening class. In a letter to Vincent Dunne entitled the "Degeneration of the Old Guard" - the charge laid at the door of Cannon, Swaback and company - Cannon pointed out:

"the other little fact that Swaback, a man with family responsibilities, finds it possible to give up his job in Chicago, come to New York at his own expense, work full time (for the League) for 3 months without pay while his savings are being consumed, then continue another full year at a weekly wage amounting to very little more than he is accustomed to getting for a day's work in his trade - and do this without whimpering - also deserves notice under the heading of the 'degeneration of the old guard.'" (Vol 2 p84.)

By contrast:

"A couple of recently graduated high school students, who are in the front ranks of the group that Shachtman appeals to against us - 'the most valuable forces for the future' - are Stenographers. They live at home, have no responsibilities, and can impose on their families, as revolutionaries should, in a pinch. Each of them in turn was taken into the national office to do the necessary stenographic work. And each of them walked out as soon as they got two weeks back in their wages. I put these little symbolic facts side by side and include that the 'young and old' argument in our league is a joke." (Vol 2 p84)

The faction fight had lasted eighteen months, the issues still unclear and demoralisation a real danger when Trotsky intervened with his proposals that the Cannon majority make organisational concessions.

Cannon acceded, without conceding his political characterisation of the Shachtman group. The way was paved for the liquidation of the factions and in May 1933 Shachtman and Swaback attended a plenum of the ILO which formally demanded their dissolution.

Although concerned with organisational rather than political questions, the issues of the 1932/33 factional struggle were important. Their successful resolution consolidated the League. They set it on course for growth, something that had been Cannon's aim in the fight.

Cannon had made errors in the faction fight, and he was big enough to acknowledge these. But what is not open to doubt is that his motives were of the best. Cannon had a keen passion to get the League stuck into the class struggle.

PREPARING FOR INTERVENTION

As early as April 1931 he had begun to elaborate a political perspective in which:

"it is perhaps more reasonable to calculate that the present crisis represents primarily a period of mental preparation of the workers for the great struggles which really get under way as the cycle turns towards economic revival." (Vol 1 337)

The task facing the Trotskyists was to be ready to meet these developments, to prepare its cadres for the test of action:

"The Left Opposition will grow in numbers and influence to the extent that it makes good in this test to the extent that it demonstrates its qualities as a fighting political organisation, not a mere propaganda circle". (Vol 2 p190)

Cannon was very keenly aware in these years that increased work in the class struggle would provide a correcting influence to circle mentality and hopefully bring new worker recruits who would enrich the experience and widen the horizons of the League.

Despite the internal problems and severe financial hardship, it is clear that the League under Cannon's leadership increasingly turned its attention to intervention in the struggles which were beginning to erupt in 1932/33. In his *History*, Cannon recalls that:

"In the early part of 1933 we began to intervene more actively in the general labor movement. After long propagandistic preparation, we started our turn towards mass work . . . We worked out our programme, formed our cadre, did our propagandistic work first. Then, when opportunities arose for activity in the labor movement, we were ready to put our activity to some purpose."

The extent of the turn is made clear in *The Communist League of America 1932-34*. Comrades Clark, Carmody and Angelo, with assistance from Oehler when money permitted, spent months as field organisers in the Illinois

Mine Fields making new contacts, creating a branch in Springfield and making headway in the Progressive Miners Association. At the same time the League took the opportunity of the Stalinists' rightward move to throw itself into work amongst the unemployed and had a high profile in the unemployed Conferences at New York and Albany; it laid plans and set out to organise

a class struggle union amongst the Minneapolis truckers.

During this period this organisation of less than 200 cadres brought out the **Militant** three times a week to highlight the importance of the struggle against fascism in Germany following Hitler's election as Chancellor in 1933, and to popularise the slogan of the workers' united front against fascism.

The defeat of the German proletariat without a fight and the subsequent endorsement of its disastrous line by the Comintern demonstrated to the ILO the final collapse of the Third International. It could no longer be regarded as reformable from within. Its capitulation necessitated the launch of a movement for the Fourth International and an end to the existence of the CLA as an opposition faction in the CP.

In America Trotsky's resolution on the turn was passed unanimously by the CLA together with a programme for action which again highlights the extent of the turn from circle existence. The programme's twelve points were:

- (1) issuing a manifesto on the new course,
- (2) moving the national office to Chicago,
- (3) transforming the **Militant** into a popular agitational paper,
- (4) establishing a theoretical magazine,
- (5) accepting members on a broader basis,
- (6) establishing united front relations and joint activities with other working class organizations, especially left-wing groups inside reformist or centrist groups,
- (7) forming nuclei within reformist and centrist organizations,
- (8) forming peripheral organizations on a broad basis,
- (9) getting members into mass organizations especially trade unions,
- (10) strengthening the central apparatus,
- (11) organizing tours by NC members,
- (12) raising a special fund for these purposes.

Of these, only the second proposal - a relic of the faction fight, the intention of which had been to move the organization away from the intrigues of the New York branch to a proletarian centre - was not acted upon. The factions were dissolved and several years of fruitful collaboration between Cannon and Shachtman ensued.

On September 30th 1933, the **Militant** declared for a New International and a new party. Recognizing its own weakness it did not declare itself as a party, but:

"Taking the necessity to create a new party as the point of departure, the Communist League proposes a frank and comradely discussion with other individuals, groups and organizations aiming toward the same goal, and submits the following points for consideration . . ." (Vol 2 p275/276.)

It then proceeded to outline the principled basis for such a party; agreement on American perspectives, on fundamental principles (first Four Congresses of the Comintern and the programme of the Left Opposition), against socialism in one country, for defence of the Soviet Union, agreement on united front tactics to exclude sectarian and opportunist errors; agreement on trade union policy and for democratic centralism.

The CLA was well aware that one by one recruitment would not bring about growth rapidly enough. It looked to leftward moving centrist forces as potential fusion partners. It combined firmness of political principle with organizational flexibility and a co-operative spirit in the field of practical work in its dealings with such forces. A series of discussions took place with the Workers Communist League and the United Workers Party. Both sets of discussions broke down for want of sufficient agreement.

More importantly discussions began in earnest with the American Workers Party (Muste's 're-christened' organization) and while principled differences, especially over internationalism, prevented an early fusion, the seeds were sown that would win the ranks and eventually the



The New York hotel strike, 1934

AWP to principled fusion. The differences over internationalism prompted Cannon to write 'Internationalism and the New Party' (*Militant*, 10th March 1934).

The article is a model of its kind. It demonstrates the falsity of counterposing the building of national organisations to the building of an international one. Cannon shows that these two tasks are, rather, necessarily complementary. Attention to one does not mean neglect of the other. He warns of the dangers of national centredness leading to capitulation to the "backwardness, prejudices, and narrow mindedness of the masses of American workers". (Vol 2 p307) and concludes:

"If we consider it impossible to build revolutionary parties without international cooperation, then we assert no less emphatically that the International can become a power only if its component parts - the national parties are really functioning organizations in the full sense of the word." (Vol 2 p309.)

To take forward the fusion with the Musteites, the CLA had to demonstrate the truth of Cannon's arguments. They had to show that the internationalists could lead the American working class in action. The first real opportunity came in January 1934 when the New York hotel workers went on strike under the leadership of B J Field, a CLA member. Field, whom Cannon had earlier had cause to remark "does not fit in a communist organisation", proved unequal to the task. His leadership of the strike owed more to his linguistic abilities (a key section of the hotel workers - the chefs - spoke only French) than his abilities as either a communist or a trade union organiser. He disdained to discuss tactics with his comrades. He began to think of himself as a big-shot after getting his face and name in the paper a couple of times. And all the time he was buckling under the pressure of the bosses and the Federal mediators. When he refused outright to act under the discipline of the CLA, they publicly expelled him. They would not risk associating Trotskyism with the mistakes of Field, even though it cost them in terms of a union base.

Any lingering doubts about the seriousness of the Trotskyists, on the part of the Muste group, if not dispelled by this action, were certainly laid to rest by their

leadership of the Minneapolis Teamster strikes in the same year (See *Workers Power* 61 'Class War in Minneapolis' for a full account of these events). These strikes demonstrated not only the seriousness but the ingenuity and tactical know-how of the CLA before the whole American labour movement. The CLA could not lead the whole class, everywhere. So it demonstrated, by example to all, what it could achieve where it did have influence. In that sense Minneapolis showed how a growing fighting propaganda group can carry out exemplary mass work without deluding itself that it has become a mass force. But, as Cannon noted, Minneapolis pointed to the road the CLA had to follow if it was to become a mass force:

"They must demonstrate a capacity for organization as well as agitation, for responsibility as well as militancy. They must convince the workers of their ability not only to organise and lead strikes aggressively, but also to settle them advantageously at the right time and consolidate the gains. In a word, the modern militants of the labor movement have the task of gaining the confidence of the workers in their ability to lead the movement all the year round and to advance the interests of the workers all the time . . . On a local scale, in a small sector of the labor movement, the Minneapolis comrades have set an example which shows the way." (Vol 2 p339/40).

The conduct of these strikes was central in proving to the ranks of the AWP that the Trotskyists were not simply cultured Marxists but also had the ability to lead. They opened the eyes of the AWP membership to Trotskyist politics and paved the way for the fusion which created the Workers Party of the US in December 1934, an event which, no less than the Minneapolis strikes, decisively marked the end of the dog days of the CLA.

The six years of political activity covered by these two volumes were momentous. Cannon's writings are a vibrant record of those years. From the minute details of the factional struggles, through to the guidelines for communist work in mass struggles, these writings pack as many lessons as they do punches. And reading them is as much an inspiration as an education.

British Trotskyism: the early years

Keith Hassell reviews

Against the Stream: A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1924-38

Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson
Socialist Platform (1986) £5.95 pbk 302pp

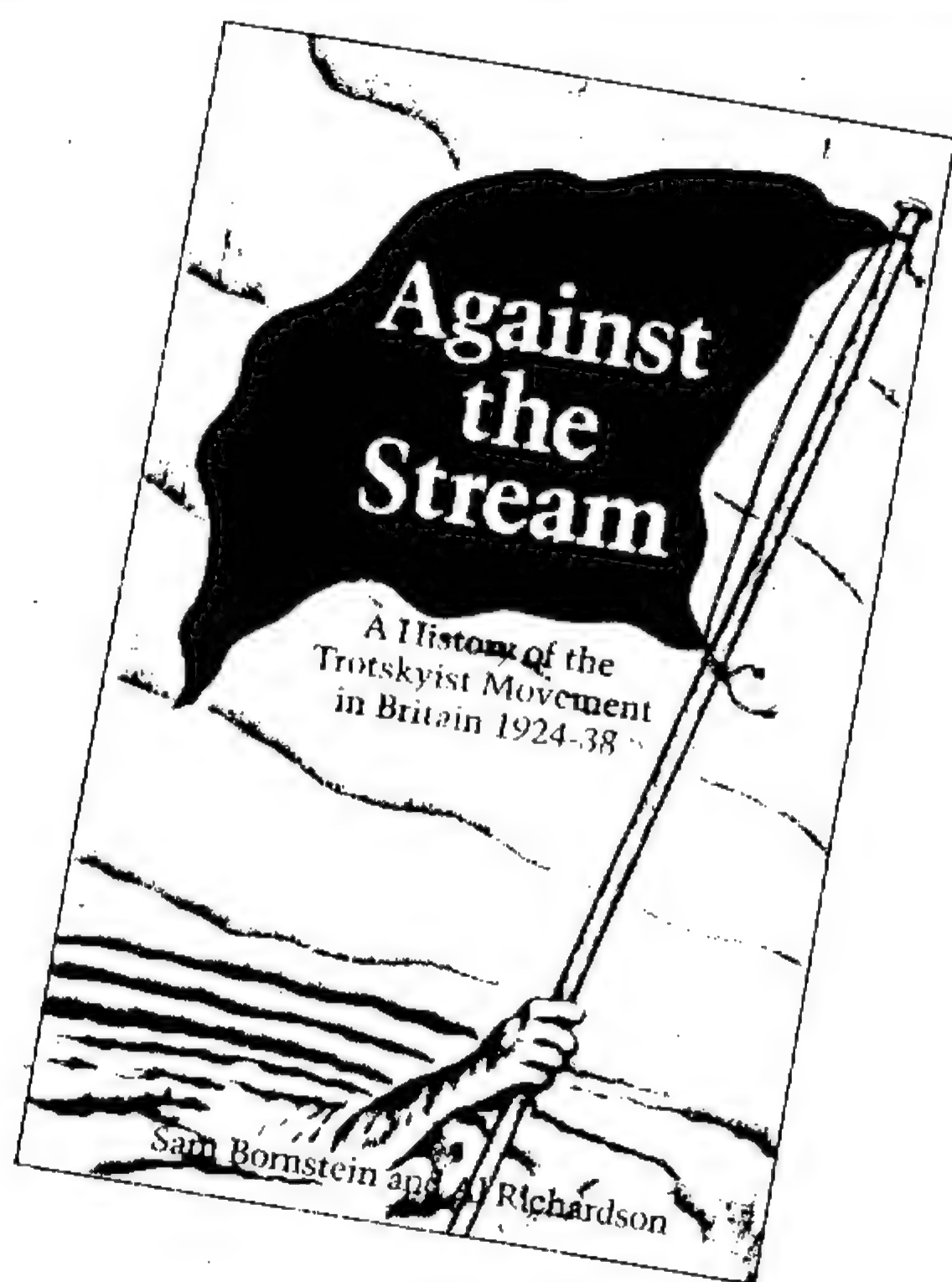
Except at the time of witch-hunts and purges the history of small groupings of revolutionaries arouse little interest in the books and journals of bourgeois society. The lives and work of great revolutionaries like Lenin and Trotsky compel attention because of the great victories with which they were associated.

Trotsky's 'defeat' by Stalin also assured a certain interest in him by the scribes and scribblers in the service of capitalism. But the history of the dozens of his supporters in Britain in the 1930s and the few hundred that rallied to Trotskyism in the 1940s has drawn little

or no attention. Its heroes are unsung, their struggles have indeed been 'hidden from history'.

It is no surprise therefore that the authors of this book should have been unable to find a commercial publisher for their book. Nor were the Labourite, Stalinist or centrist publishers interested since there would be little comfort for them in its pages. Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson are to be applauded for persisting in raising the finance to publish it themselves.

They have produced a lively and detailed account of the origins and early, difficult, pre-war years of British Trotskyism. Using the internal material and public propaganda of the groups together with revealing interviews from comrades active at the time, Bornstein and Richardson have given us a book from which we can draw many lessons.



Even those not overly interested in the political debates between the groups will benefit from the inoculation it provides against the stream of self-congratulatory Stalinist books and articles praising their role in the Popular Fronts of the 1930s. The chapter on the Moscow Trials (1936-38), the material on the disgusting witch-hunts and suppression of democracy as a result of their 'entryism' into the Labour League of Youth are excellent ammunition for the continuing struggle against Stalinism.

Those within the Trotskyist movement today will find much more than this. They will find inspiration in the self-sacrifice and fidelity to principle of these men and women who 'swam against the stream' of the degeneration of the Communist International. And what a raging torrent this was to swim against! To do so meant facing hardship - loss of their jobs in the case of Reg Groves and Harry Wicks, crude frame-ups in the case of Starkey Jackson (accused of embezzlement).

To this were added the most vile political slanders. To be labelled 'counter-revolutionaries', 'agents of Hitler and fascism' by the CP meant something in the 1930s. It meant isolation from the most revolutionary or militant workers under the Stalinists' influence. It meant repeated physical harassment by CP hoodlums. The book recounts Jock Haston's story of how at Hyde Park corner he got one of them to progress from physical intimidation to argument, then discussion and how this eventually led to the recruitment of his assailant, Thomas Gerard Healy!

Fighting the lunacy of the 'Third Period' and warning of the impending disaster in Germany; warding off the Stalinists attempted take-over of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), combatting the disastrous Popular Front Strategy in Spain and the infamous Moscow Trials, the more one reads the more the reader's admiration for these comrades grows and grows.

But an important political question has to be answered. Why were these comrades unable to create a unified and stable Trotskyist organisation in Britain? The book gives us much information and important insights into why this failure occurred though it does not give an explicit answer.

British Trotskyism as an organised tendency was late born. The International Left Opposition (ILO) - founded in 1928 - sought to win the Comintern back from centrism to the politics of Leninism. In Britain individual

CP members like Harry Wicks were early sympathisers of the Russian Opposition. Wicks was in Moscow in 1926/27 when the Opposition was driven from the Russian Party.

Yet the first grouping in Britain to identify with the ILO was the Marxian League led by Frank Ridley. They were not CP members but operated on the fringes of the ILP and made contact with the ILO in 1931. In fact, they were not in any real sense Trotskyists. They disdained work in the Labour Party (LP), they wrote off the trade unions and restricted themselves to ultra-left passive propaganda (e.g. street corner meetings).

By the end of 1931 differences within the Marxian League came to a head. The political intervention of Trotsky and the ILO succeeded in breaking up Ridley's group. By the year's end Hugo Dewar and others had left to join the Balham Group of oppositionists which had developed within the CP. In December 1931 the British section of the ILO was formally set up.

For virtually the whole of the next year the British ILO was engaged in work within the CP. Internationally the ILO was concentrating its critique of Stalinism on the disastrous effects of the Third Period, a policy which labelled the social democratic parties and unions as 'social-fascists'. Only a united front 'from below' (i.e. without the reformist leaders) was permissible. In Germany, with a mass 'communist' party, this contributed to a fatal split in the working-class forces and paralysis in the face of Hitler's rise. Only the Trotskyists advanced the policy of the united front of workers' organisations. But their influence was negligible and the German workers were crushed.

Richardson and Bornstein show up an early and serious mistake of the Balham group. They concentrated their fire at first on the question of the British Communist Party's trade union work and curiously they criticised it from the left.

The CPGB was in fact attempting a minor adjustment of policy away from the worst excesses of sectarian isolationism of the Third Period. This policy in any case came late to the CPGB, whose old guard leaders such as Gallagher, Hannington and Murphy dragged their feet over implementation for nearly two years. The new line was pushed for by Dutt and Politt. The latter, however, only gained control of the party from the old guard in December 1929.

The Balham group obviously had certain illusions in Dutt and attacked the 1931 re-adjustment of the CP. Their criticisms were thus not those of the ILO. This is scarcely surprising since their contacts with the latter up to this point were slim indeed, largely through reading copies of the Communist League of America's **Militant**.

The fact that the Balham Trotskyists fought on this issue helped the Stalinists to isolate them. When they did in fact turn their attention to the German question they were already in a weak position, easily portrayed as ultra-lefts and sectarians by the leadership.

By November 1932 the Balham Group had been expelled and operated as an external faction until March 1933 when the ILO declared, in the wake of the German catastrophe, that the Comintern was irreformable. A new international party of world revolution was necessary.

This rapid turn of events and the political re-adjustment it necessitated was to wreak havoc with the British Trotskyists. The re-orientation meant a turn away from the communist parties and towards the centrist forces that had emerged either within or on the left flank of the parties of the Second International - the ILP in Britain, the SAP in Germany, and the SFIO in France. In 1933 and 1935 Trotsky advocated entry by the small ILO grouplets into a number of these centrist parties. This tactical re-orientation was to split the British Trotskyists.

The ILP had long been the main vehicle for individual socialists wanting to play a role within the Labour Party.

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They had a group of their own MPs within the Parliamentary Labour Party and claimed around 30,000 members. The ILP had moved left during the First World War and under the impact of the Russian revolution had flirted with the idea of joining the Third (communist) International.

The crisis of the late 1920s and the betrayal of Ramsay MacDonald pushed it sharply to the left again. Dominated by the 'Clydeside' MP James Maxton the ILP moved to create an ILP group of MPs effectively independent of the PLP majority, answerable first and foremost to the policy decisions of ILP not Labour Party Conferences. This the PLP mandarins and the trade union bureaucrats would not tolerate and refused endorsement to ILP parliamentary candidates not accepting the PLP's standing orders. Consequently only 5 ILP MPs were elected in the October 1931 General Election.

After further PLP intransigence the ILP decided to disaffiliate from the Labour Party (July 29th 1932). It was precipitated into crisis by this decision - losing half its membership within a year. Now was probably the critical moment for intervention in this centrist party, yet the Balham Group was still necessarily involved within the CP or orientated towards it during this year and beyond.

Once the ILO's line of orientation to reforming the Comintern changed after the German debacle to one of fighting for a new (Fourth) International, Trotsky throughout the whole second half of 1933 repeatedly urged the British group to enter the ILP. At its December 1933 Conference the Communist League split over this issue with a majority opposed to entry. Trotsky and the ILO sanctioned the split and backed the minority around Harber who proceeded to take his group into the ILP.

The authors draw no balance sheet of this experience apart from implicit support for Trotsky's advice. Yet in retrospect serious negative consequences of the split are very clear. Undoubtedly the ILO European leadership and Trotsky were right on the tactical question of ILP entry but the split's effects were very bad on the nucleus of British Trotskyism. Events were to demonstrate that it is easier to effect a split than to bring about a fusion. The difficult task of creating a leadership and an organisation with sufficient grasp of 'Trotskyist' principles to operate with tactical flexibility was aborted.

The Communist League was still a very heterogeneous grouping at that time. The early cadres came from a variety of political traditions and class backgrounds. Some, like Wicks and Groves, were from skilled working-class backgrounds. Others, like Harber and the LSE circle were from the middle-class.

More significantly, genuine political differences of orientation existed. Groves consistently gave local work in the trade unions or Labour Party a higher priority and de-emphasised the need for a fight primarily around the question of a new International. This issue caused friction in the Communist League early in 1933.

In addition, the sharp turn away from the CP and towards the ILP advocated in the summer of 1933 confused and disorientated many cadres. After all, as Richardson and Bornstein point out, many League members had been recruited out of the ILP precisely because of the League's pro-CP orientation.

In these circumstances what above all was necessary was to **consolidate** the League around fundamental questions of programme and method. It was a propaganda group in the first instance. At this stage of party building the ability to make bold successful tactical manoeuvres requires first of all a membership steeled, well-trained and cohesive.

While the discussions with Ridley's group and during 1932/33 in the League had represented an important start, it was only the beginning. It would seem from the book that by the end of 1933 the League had grown

to 52 and its mastery of Trotskyism was improving. To have fostered a split or given encouragement to one around a tactical perspective was dangerous in the extreme.

The fruits of intervention in the ILP were undoubtedly considerable. But they were in any case largely lost due to the lateness of entry, the small number of the entrists and their inexperience. Other fruitful areas of intervention were also open to the League by work in the Labour League of Youth (LLOY), and the Socialist League (a left wing organisation mainly made up of the ILPers who refused to leave the LP and which took over the ILP's function within the Labour Party).

Cadres could have been steadily accumulated with a unified organisation, a coherent programme and regular publications. But this level of consolidation together with the discipline of its individual members within the group were some way off by the end of 1933.

The lack of an established tried and trusted leadership (such as the Communist League of America had to some extent at this time) together with a relatively under-developed perspective or action programme for Britain meant that the split in late 1933 was far too premature politically and probably not warranted by the objective possibilities opened up by ILP work, especially as the greatest opportunities for winning the bulk of the ILP had probably been in 1931-33.

This is in no way to denigrate the work the entrists performed - aided by Trotsky's articles for the **New Leader** (the ILP's paper). Undoubtedly, as Bornstein and Richardson show, they saved the ILP from falling into the hands of the Stalinists. But the overall impression is that British Trotskyism needed the **concentration** of the talents of the various groups **not** their dispersal.

The lack of real ideological cohesiveness was to dog the movement. This is well illustrated by the fact that every time a tactical turn was proposed - whether into or out of the ILP, into or out of the LP - or when it came to developing a position on the Sino-Japanese war or Spain, conflicts erupted. While differences naturally arise in any organisation there does not seem to have been any common approach to the solution of problems.

Richardson and Bornstein's book amply illustrates the strengths of the Trotskyists in this pre-war period. They sacrificed much to bring to the attention of the labour movement Trotsky's analysis of international events - on Germany and Spain for example. This was the case whether in **Red Flag** or **Fight**. They also defended the Spanish Revolution against the Stalinist's attempt to crush and get real workers solidarity action to break the Republic's isolation. Around the Abyssinian conflict with Italy the various groups - whether in the ILP, in the LP or in neither - alone argued for a principled anti-imperialist position on war.

Yet the same pages of their various publications also convey a great weakness of the movement at that time - its general lack of focused concrete propaganda and agitation on the British class struggle. This was particularly true of the trade unions. It seems from the book that this was where the 'Trotskyism' of the groups was at its weakest. While unemployment among many of the comrades themselves obviously contributed to this weakness it cannot excuse the lack of propaganda on the questions of the day.

On the other hand, as the book shows with the number of pages devoted to the subject, the main tactical issue that exercised the minds and pens of the Trotskyists most was the question of entrism into the Labour Party. At a general level the overwhelming hostility of Stalinism to the Trotskyists probably gave rise to a certain Stalinophobia; that is a differential hostility to stalinist as compared to social-democratic reformism. In practice this can lead to a certain 'softness', an opportunism in relation to the Labour Party.

In any event there were certainly differences between

the group on this question. At one extreme there was Grove's work both during and after his membership of the Marxist League. One cannot help concluding that his work did not have a very high Trotskyist profile for much of the time and certainly by his 1938 Aylesbury by-election campaign his politics were not clearly distinct from left Labourism, that is they had a centrist character. At the other extreme stood CLR James' Marxist Group with its hostility to doing any work in the LP.

The work of Harber's group - the Bolshevik-Leninist Group - seems most interesting. They did some good work among the Labour League of Youth, for example. They formally recognised the need to use the LP entry work to build an independent revolutionary party. On the other hand, they seem to have had an exaggerated, 'objectivist' view of the crisis of reformism and the results it would bring them. They also publically denounced the idea of maintaining an open organisation outside the LP for fear of 'alienating' the rank and file of the party. They also created the fiction of a 'centrist' organisation - Militant Labour League - composed almost exclusively of themselves, as a 'half-way house' for organising the 'left-wing', which entailed them seriously blunting the edge of the revolutionary programme.

In essence, like the authors themselves, they do not seem to have understood the difference between 'entryism' and 'fraction work' in the LP. Being 'for' or 'against' LP work, being or not being sectarian, or a 'passive propagandist' seems to have been too easily reduced to the question of whether or not you were in favour of total entry, that is, abandoning an open organisation and paper. That false way of posing the problem has dogged the Trotskyists in Britain from that day to this.

An organisation with its own discipline based on a coherent revolutionary programme, openly addressed to the labour movement through its own publications and through the agitational and propaganda work of its members is an essential starting point. Such an organisation would of course organise its members to work within the mass organisations of the working class, the trade unions and the Labour Party.

It would seek to win supporters in the latter and encourage the formation of a revolutionary left-wing.

From time to time the reformist parties pass through crises in which - under the pressure of their activists and the class struggle - they move sharply to the left. The police regime of the party bureaucracy, of the MPs and union leaders is greatly weakened.

Then a 'total entry' as a public revolutionary fraction will be necessary. But nowhere in Trotsky's practise nor in that of the British Trotskyists of the 1930s will one find a recipe for permanent total entry, lasting for decades, predicated on a transformation of the Labour Party at some point in the future into a revolutionary party.

To argue that to refuse 'total entry' is the norm of revolutionary practice is tantamount to sectarianism, as some in the 1930s and many since have done is absurd. Historically, of course, those like James or Ridley who could only counterpose street Trotskyism' to total entry provided an easy target and that surely was part of the problem.

One conclusion we can draw from the book is that none of the groups in themselves maintained a complete grasp of Trotskyism from the beginning to the end of their existence. Workers Power has no interest in tracing a red thread of 'revolutionary continuity' - a superstitious equivalent of the 'Apostolic Succession'. We identify with these comrades **struggle** and seek to learn the lessons for today of both the positive and negative aspects of their work.

The history of British Trotskyism is one of fractured organisations, not of an unbroken political evolution. The second volume will undoubtedly show this even more sharply. But if we do not recognise an 'apostolic succession' neither do we believe in virgin births. Despite an occasional shortage of analysis neither do Richardson and Bornstein, and that is the great strength of the book. It is a non-factional account of the struggle of authentic revolutionaries to stand against the stream of political events.

Whatever their own failings and misfortunes those few dozen comrades established Trotskyism in Britain and for that we owe them an incalculable debt. This book - and we hope its successor - will play an important role in passing on the torch these comrades lit. Buy a copy and then buy another one for someone else and thus aid the speedy publication of the second volume!

Pioneers of the Comintern?

Paul Mason reviews

Revolutionary Vanguard: The Early Years of the Communist Youth International, 1914-1924

Richard Cornell

University of Toronto Press (1982) £26.00 hbk 353pp

As a study of the Communist Youth International (CYI) in its pre-Stalinist years this book has two major faults.

First, the author has obviously very little sympathy for the revolutionary socialist politics espoused by the early leaders of the CYI. He sympathises with them rather as "revolutionary romantic" individuals.

Secondly, Cornell displays little interest in the actual political work of the sections of the CYI and its social-democratic predecessor. In the whole 350-odd

pages there are barely a few paragraphs which describe the kind of agitational and propaganda work done by the mass youth organisations.

Both the book's lack of national context and its failure to take a consistent attitude to the politics of the various tendencies in the CYI are rooted in its origin as a 'democratic' anti-soviet academic tract.

Thus the book's underlying argument - always hedged around by Cornell but summarised by some obliging person in the introduction:

"... that differences between the Leninist and Stalinist eras were of degree rather than of kind."

So in Cornell's schema the CYI becomes just another ill-fated "pluralist tendency" swallowed up by "monolithic"

Bolshevism so beloved of American politics professors.

For us however the early years of the CYI contain other, more important, lessons. Despite its weakness Cornell's book throws some revealing light on this period, if read alongside the actual documents of the Comintern, and with an understanding of the revolutionary events which gave birth to it.

YOUTH AND THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

As early as 1886 the youth of the Belgian Socialist Party had been organised in a militant youth section; the Young Guard. This became the model for other social-democratic youth movements which sprang up in the 1890s and early 1900s, for example in Italy and Austria. These youth sections however were invariably in conflict with the reformist leadership of the social-democratic parties. This was not simply due to "youthful idealism" but to the fact that the labour aristocrats and parliamentary legalists of the right-wing could never consistently defend the interests of young workers. This would have meant an all-out fight against the growing war-drives of the imperialist countries and military conscription of youth, and against the super-exploitation of youth under the apprentice system. Such a fight went directly against the political and material interests of the labour movement leaders.

Nowhere was the conflict over the "youth question" more sharp than in Germany. In 1906 several regional groups of young workers linked up to form the Union of Free Youth Organisations of Germany (ZJD). Under Prussian law, however, youth had no political rights at all - even to form political organisations. The Prussian police raided their meetings and imprisoned their leaders. The ZJD also found enemies in the leadership of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD). Obsessed by legality and electoral routinism the last thing the SPD leaders wanted was an independent, illegal and militant youth movement. Only in the left-wing of the adult party - in the shape of future revolutionary leader Karl Liebknecht - did the ZJD find an ally.

In 1904, alarmed at the slide toward world war, Liebknecht had argued that an independent youth organisation and anti-military propaganda amongst youth was the key to fighting against the coming mass slaughter. In 1907 he published a pamphlet; **Youth and Militarism** (better known today as **Militarism and anti-Militarism**). The book was banned immediately, Liebknecht charged with high treason and jailed for 18 months.

As Cornell describes, Liebknecht attended the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the Second International whilst awaiting his trial. The Congress itself was indecisive on the question of how the social-democratic parties should struggle against the coming imperialist war. By omission the resolution on war denied the youth organisations any active role in this struggle. However, at the first International Socialist Youth Conference (ISYC), held immediately afterwards, the mood was different. The most militant socialist youth were already engaged in anti-war agitation, sometimes in conflict with the adult parties. Determined to set the seal on their organisational independence from the adult leaders they decided to found the International Union of Socialist Youth Organisations (IUSYO) in parallel to the Second International.

Between 1907 and the outbreak of war the IUSYO lived a precarious existence. The activities of the International Bureau, run by Kautskyite Robert Danneberg from Vienna, were limited to that of a publishing and clearing house. The threat of withdrawal of funds constantly hanging over it ensured that the IUSYO never became a political leadership for the youth movements. At the planned Congress of the Second International of August 1914 the right-wing were to have given the IUSYO the coup-de-grace and wound it up altogether.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE IUSYO

At the outbreak of war the whole of the Second International was still formally committed to the policy of the 1907 Stuttgart Congress which called for an international general strike in the event of hostilities breaking out. In the event the social-democratic parties rallied not to the flag of international workers' solidarity but to their respective national flags. One by one they voted in parliament to endorse the war budgets of the imperialist butchers. Overnight the Socialist International and the IUSYO became a dead letter as the 'socialist' ministers took their places in the war cabinets and millions of young workers were marched off to their deaths.

The opposition to the treason of the social-democratic leaders was both limited and confused. In Germany even Liebknecht, having voted within the SPD parliamentary group **against** war credits, followed the party discipline in the Reichstag. Only in December did he break party discipline to vote against war credits. It was the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party alone which adopted a consistent opposition policy from the beginning of the war. By 1915 however, the left in the Second International had begun its first attempts to reorganise. One of the earliest focal points for international reorganisation was provided by the Bern conference of the IUSYO, organised in April 1915 by the young German-Swiss socialist Willi Münzenberg.

One of the greatest failings of Cornell's book is the absence of any real investigation into the debates and documents of this conference, even though its importance is recognised. We are told that the views of the centrists Balabanova and Grimm carried the day, and that Lenin sat demonically in a cafe downstairs dictating speeches and resolutions to the Bolshevik delegate, Inessa Armand. But what were the key political points at issue?

By this time the socialist anti-war opposition contained three political trends. First, the old Marxist 'centre' around Kautsky, Hilferding, etc, having remained loyal to the social chauvinists in August 1914, now found themselves increasingly under attack by the reformist right wing and forced to seek allies amongst the left. In essence they wanted to sit out the war neither propagating chauvinism nor opposing it. Second were a variety of left tendencies, for example, the nucleus around Luxemburg and Liebknecht in Germany, Trotsky's left-Menshevik paper, **Nashe Slovo** etc. who favoured some form of revolutionary action against their own governments' war effort, but who remained unconvinced of the need to break finally and decisively with the old 'centre' and of the need for the strategy of "revolutionary defeatism". Finally, were the Bolsheviks who argued, beginning at the Bern youth conference, for turning the war into a civil war, and for a new International based on a split with the 'centre' and on firm revolutionary and defeatist principles. Between 1915 and 1919 Lenin and his followers waged a ruthless political battle against the "centrists" and all who wanted to conciliate with them. The Bolsheviks fastened like terriers to the reconstituted IUSYO after the Bern conference, seeing in it the future elements of revolutionary parties in a dozen countries.

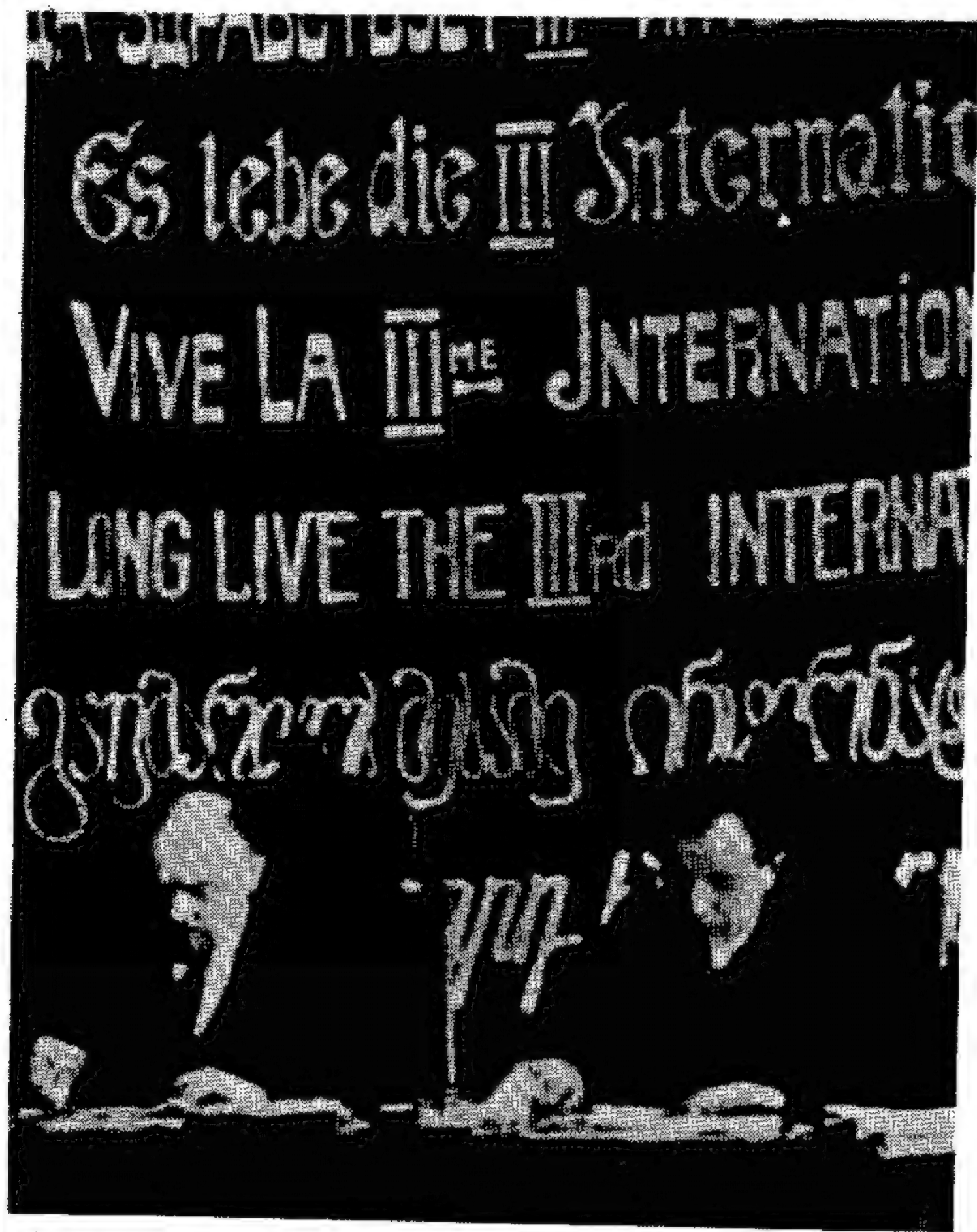
Only eight months after the Second International wound up its operations the youth had raised again the banner of an international workers' party - this time without the constraints of inactivity formerly imposed by the social-democratic worthies. The conference instituted an International Youth Day and initiated a series of international anti-war demonstrations.

Münzenberg - the International Secretary - was delegated to write a programme for the IUSYO for future consideration at a full congress when the fighting ended. In accordance with the decisions of the conference it was based around the call for total disarmament, a

position Lenin attacked, both in discussions with Münzenberg and in an article in 1916, for leaving out of account the need for a civil war, i.e. revolutionary violence in the struggle for socialism.

On this point the IUSYO took a backward step. It more or less formally decided to adopt a 'neutral' position with regard to the factional controversy between the three groups of anti-war socialists. For Cornell this is the absolute zenith of its achievements: totally independent of the right wing and not yet in the grip of the Bolshevik left-wing. For him everything afterwards goes downhill.

At Zimmerwald (to which the IUSYO was not invited) and at the Kienthal conference in April 1916 (which Münzenberg attended as IUSYO delegate) Cornell writes that, "pressure on the socialist youth to become involved in politics became intense". Certainly, after the Kienthal conference Münzenberg himself was won to the position of the Zimmerwald left and **Jugend Internationale (Youth International)**, the IUSYO's official paper, dropped its call for disarmament in favour of defeatism.



Lenin at the First Congress of the Comintern

In this period the IUSYO was little more than a few individuals outside of the neutral countries where the youth movements had retained their mass base. Yet it was an important focus for the anti-war socialists. Eleven numbers of its journal were published between September 1915 and May 1918 and all the main figures in the Zimmerwald movement contributed to it, including Lenin and Trotsky, in order to thrash out an anti-war programme.

It was through activities like this, rather than through any mass work, that the IUSYO began to grow as the war neared an end and it was for this work that a later Comintern resolution recognised that these youth sections:

"became independent political organisations and acted as the vanguard in the revolutionary struggle". (The First Four Congresses of the Comintern. Aller, ed. Ink Links, p231).

REVOLUTIONARY OPPOSITION

Between the Bern conference of the IUSYO and the Berlin conference of 1919 every major continental socialist party split or fractured under the impetus of a mass revolutionary upsurge. In almost every case it was the youth who took the lead in solidifying a revolutionary opposition to the reformist or centrist leaders of the old social-democratic parties.

In Austria the youth section, the VSAJ, was split in advance of the adult party, with the left forming a new pro-Third International organisation, the VKPJ. In France the "Committee for Autonomy" within the youth section of the SFIO formed a large and independent section of the forces which eventually came together to form the PCF. In Italy, by 1917 the parliamentary fraction of the PSI refused to send a delegate to the Florence congress of the FGSI (its youth section) on the grounds that the FGSI had become "Bolshevik". In Germany, where the left and centre forces represented at Zimmerwald had split in 1917 jointly to form the USPD, it was not until mid-1918 that parallel forces in the ZJD split with the right wing to form the Free Socialist Youth (FSJ). Through such glimpses as these, it is easy to see why the youth sections at this time regarded themselves as the "revolutionary vanguard". Even before the first Comintern Congress of January 1919 these organisations had utilised their organisational independence and particularly their independent international secretariat in Zurich to marshal the forces of the revolutionary left. Lenin, in December 1916 had emphasised the importance of the youth sections' independence:

"... we must advocate the unconditional organisational independence of the youth organisations, not only because the opportunists fear this independence, but also because ... without full independence the youth will neither be in a position to become good socialists nor prepared to carry socialism forward." (Sotsial Demokrat 1916).

Cornell cannot resist adding:

"Lenin omitted deliberately any reference to political independence for the young socialists were expected to fall obediently into place behind the leadership of the Bolsheviks and their supporters". (Cornell p23)

This is a wilful misunderstanding of Lenin's position. Lenin was trying to win over the youth to his programme of revolutionary defeatism and of civil war, and to his project of a break with the centre and the formation of a new international. Any student of the period will know that Lenin spent the whole of his time from 1915 to 1917 on this project.

The struggle of the youth leaders for independence from the leading bodies of the parent international was completely justified. Independence is first and foremost a political question not an organisational one. In the years 1907 to 1914 the right and centre in the Second International, particularly in its biggest section, the SPD in Germany, became increasingly the champion solely of parliamentarianism and routine trade union tactics.

An increasingly craven legalism was to be observed in the practice of the International which was to become ever more at odds with the revolutionary statements of the earlier congresses.

In so far as the youth rebelled against this conservatism of the apparatus and refused to submit to its political consequences, they were justified. In addition, attempts by the leading centre of the Second International to control and direct the activities of the IUSYO could only be a bureaucratic device, since all the national sections - including the Russian - disavowed the idea that the International Bureau should lead and direct the work of national groups.

Such a conception of political leadership - democratic centralism - required before anything else the political and programmatic **basis** for such forms of organisation to come into existence first. This was to be the historic contribution of Lenin and Bolshevism and was only to take final shape during the First World War itself.

On the other hand, the emphasis the youth gave to 'independence' was to cause difficulties in later years when the relationship of the CYI to the Comintern was discussed. Throughout the book Cornell fetishises this independence, and gives it a purely formal and **organisational** content. Hence, he can applaud the spirit of the youth's rebellion against the Second International and condemn the political subordination of the later CYI to the Comintern. He thus shows himself to be ignorant of one of the essential differences between social-democracy and revolutionary communism.

In addition, Lenin's 1916 quote also makes it clear that Lenin saw in the rapid leftward evolution of the youth sections not only potential allies but potential **leaders** of new, revolutionary parties. Bordiga, of the FGS, for example, was an individual who had come to conclusions broadly similar to Lenin's via the route of an independent **political** fight against the PSA leadership. Thus Lenin saw the ability to take and implement independent **political** decisions, as the necessary school for leaders like Bordiga and Münzenberg and as the best guarantee of their evolution towards Bolshevik positions.

Early in 1919 thousands of young German soldiers were seizing control of their regiments, thousands of working class youth marching on the streets of Berlin clamouring for working class power. Newly radicalised young workers and demobbed soldiers poured into the FSJ in which the majority now owed allegiance to the newly formed German Communist Party (KPD). Liebknecht stood at the head of a "Red Soldiers League".

However, as one contemporary historian recognised

"... to these hard and impatient men who had just returned from the war it was not a question of having conferences or courses in theory, there had to be action". (Broue, quoted in Harman *The Lost Revolution* p65.)

The problem was that this attitude was not simply characteristic of the mass of young workers but also of many of the FSJ leaders.

The youth of the KPD overwhelmingly backed the position of rejecting work in parliament, rejecting work in the unions, rejecting trying to win over the workplace leaders in the old USPD, and saw revolutionary tactics basically as how to organise an armed uprising as soon as possible. This was no accident, for the youth had been propelled into the front line of a revolution. But it was in this atmosphere that the political ideas not only of the German youth but also the Italian, Austrian, French, etc took shape. Because in Germany there was no experienced party leadership to temper their spontaneous ultra-leftism, and because in the case of Italy and France the youth were to actually **become** the leadership of the early CPs, it eventually fell to the Comintern leadership in 1920-21 to educate the youth in revolutionary tactics other than of the military "putch"; since on insurrection which did not draw the mass of workers behind it would be little more than a putch. The failure of the 1919 Spartakist uprising in Germany made this education all the more imperative.

THE BERLIN CONFERENCE 1919

By November 1919, when the delegates to the IUSYO conference met illegally in Berlin, they came, for the most part, as representatives of mass organisations. They met in secret, in the back room of a tavern in Neukölln. Every day they had to change location.

The ECCI had already issued a call for all revolutionary organisations to join the Comintern. The strength

of the left within the IUSYO meant that it was a foregone conclusion that the youth international would opt for the Comintern. However the Berlin conference saw problems arise as to the role of the international and its relation to the Comintern which were to intensify during the next three years.

Present at the conference were delegates from the Komsomol - the Russian Communist youth organisation formed in 1918 - and from the ECCI itself. Cornell portrays the arguments at the conference as a conflict between the cynical manoeuvring of the Russian/ECCI delegation and the naive but idealistic Western Europeans. In fact there was a series of political questions underlying the debates at Berlin which the serious student of the Comintern should consider in detail.

Until relatively late in the day most of the leaders of the IUSYO considered the Berlin congress as a forum for unifying all those youth organisations committed in general to socialist revolution. The Comintern leadership on the other hand insisted on the necessity in this period of creating politically homogeneous communist nuclei in each country. Cornell's sympathies at this stage lie with those, like Münzenberg and Polano (the Italian youth delegate), who had wanted to invite to the conference "centrist" formations such as the Austrian VSAJ. He writes, **"Revolutionary solidarity became such an exclusive category that it left out almost as many young socialists as it included."** In the event the split between KPD and USPD elements in the FSJ in October 1919 convinced most that the Berlin conference should exclude youth organisations of the centre.

The ECCI view also prevailed, though only narrowly, over the question of anarchist/syndicalist organisations. The Comintern had originally proposed unity with anarchist and syndicalist elements who would support the dictatorship of the proletariat. By November 1919 however it had become more circumspect. Under the influence of Komsomol delegate Shatskin and ECCI representative

Bronski the conference eventually passed a statement declaring that the youth international **"clearly fights against syndicalist ideology and the anarchists"**.

The decision to exclude them was as equally justified as the decision to exclude centrists. Why? Because those who, in the course of revolutionary struggle, systematically isolate the vanguard from the masses by their policies, are as dangerous as those who hold back the masses.

At the Berlin conference in 1919 debate came to focus on two questions: the possibilities for revolutionary action and the nature of the new youth international.

From his cell in a Berlin jail Karl Radek sent a message to the conference which emphasised again what

Luxemburg had emphasised at the KPD's founding conference ten months before: that the seizure of power by the communist vanguard in Germany was **not** just around the corner, and that the young communists needed a set of tactics and demands which could win over the pro-SPD and USPD masses. He emphasised the importance of trade union work and of participation in parliament. His views were echoed by Bronski but not widely understood by the delegates. In particular Richard Schüller, the Austrian delegate, Felix Lewinsohn of the FSJ and Polano of Italy argued for a "putschist" strategy with regard to the seizure of power (i.e. whether or not the party had won the majority in organisations such as Workers and Soldiers Councils) and an abstentionist policy with regard to parliament. On the latter point they had the support of Münzenberg, and on both questions the congress passed resolutions that were politically indecisive.

Cornell's treatment of this debate, though reasonably thorough, totally confuses the position of Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg on the question of the seizure of power. He writes:

"In an important way these differences were related to those between the Leninist and Luxemburgist

notions of how the party should be organised and how and when 'the revolution' would occur" (Cornell p78.),

then proceeds to inform us that:

"Lenin rejected any suggestion that the masses themselves were capable of determining their own future."

Without knowing it, Cornell misunderstands Lenin in exactly the way as the ultra-left at Berlin. In reality the whole of Lenin's tactics between February and October 1917 were aimed at winning the mass of workers and poor peasants (through winning a majority in the soviets please note, Mr "democrat" Cornell). In July 1917 in a way parallel to Luxemburg's efforts to persuade the KPD between November 1918 and January 1919 Lenin turned the Bolshevik party to the task of **preventing** a premature armed uprising in Petrograd. The problem for figures such as Schüller was that this was a Lenin they did not, and perhaps could not yet know about.

The actual statutes which the ECCI had drawn up for the youth international, now renamed the Communist Youth International, were accepted by the conference with little discussion. A five-person leadership was elected consisting of Münsenberg, Fleig, Samuelson, Shatskin and Polano.

A major disagreement then arose over the question of the role of the CI and its relations to the Comintern. Radek's message to conference, in line with Lenin's view of the CYI, emphasised that the organisational independence of the CYI could not be taken to mean that it had any longer the same "vanguard" role it had once played in regard to the Second International. He wrote:

"Its only justification as a special movement and individual organisation alongside communist parties of the proletariat is that communist agitation amongst youth needs to fit the latter's abilities to perceive reality, that separate youth organisations contribute to the growth of independent young proletarian revolutionaries." (Cornell p90.)

This loss of "political independence" was greeted with dismay by some of the West European youth leaders, and eventually accepted only grudgingly by Münsenberg. However at the time it had a specific content which is not fully explained by Cornell. First, the Comintern wanted to bring under its discipline the youth sections which were still formally affiliated also to centrist or leftward moving social-democratic parties such as the French and Italians. It wanted to ensure co-operation between its allies in the adult parties and those amongst the youth. This had not always previously been the case.

Secondly, the Comintern sought to turn the youth organisations towards "educational" work in order to consolidate both the political leadership and the membership. This was in direct response to the perceived lack of political culture amongst the youth and the early Communist parties.

Thirdly, the spontaneous ultra-leftism of many of the youth (already displayed in the debate over strategy) could only be curbed within the discipline of the CI itself.

At no point was the loss of political independence meant to imply that the CYI lost its right to vote on and carry out policies independently or, as Cornell implies, that it should become a mere puppet of the ECCI. Nor is it correct to say that the Komsomol delegates advocated "education" rather than "political action" as a result of their one-sided (i.e. post-revolutionary) experience in Russia - though it may be that Shatskin's arguments had drawn over-heavily on the example of the Komsomol whose "educational work" for a state where the working class held power would necessarily have been different in character to that of the German and Italian sections caught in the midst of revolutionary upheavals.

In the last analysis the debate over organisational independence had a thoroughly **political** content. It reflected a conflict of political emphasis. On the one hand the ECCI had entered on a tactical course of attempting to win over the centrist parties or to split them on the question of Comintern affiliation. On the other, the youth had either split already from these parties or formed within them the most politically solid communist nucleus. Forged in the crucible of revolution, the politics of the youth sections contained a degree of ultra-leftism which it was no longer possible for the Comintern to use constructively.

The Berlin conference ended with a 17-8 vote in favour of adherence to the Comintern. The resolution was a compromise between the ECCI position and that of the West-European sections. It read:

"The CYI accepts the basic decisions of the first congress of the Third International and forms part of this communist international. The central organs of the CYI are organisationally linked with the Third International and struggle in closest partnership with it." (Cornell p97.)

The CYI was thus launched into existence, claiming 300,000 adherents. As Cornell points out:

"The location of the ECCYI (the central organ) in Berlin symbolised the independent existence of the CYI. The German youth movement was the dominant influence in the CYI as the Russian party was in the Comintern." (Cornell p102.)

THE "REVOLUTIONARY OFFENSIVE"

In the period before the third Comintern congress of 1921 a new split opened up within the youth international. The end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921 had seen the international revolutionary wave begin to ebb. The Comintern leadership now sought to steer the Communist parties into a decisive turn "to the masses" under the slogan of the "united front". It was no longer adequate for the communist parties to concentrate on splitting the centrist and reformist parties and preparing for insurrection. In a period of retreat they needed to be able to consolidate their "routine" or "peacetime" work; in the factories, in the trade unions, in election to bourgeois parliaments, etc.

Without ever ceasing to criticise the leaders of the reformist parties the communist parties were now to build unity in action with the rank-and-file and, where possible, with the leaders. Those who opposed the united front tactic justified their position with the theory of the "revolutionary offensive". This was the refusal to recognise the ebb in the tide of class struggle. It was in the ranks of the CYI that the Comintern found some of the most intransigent opponents to the positions which were to be adopted at the Third Comintern Congress, and some of the greatest advocates of the theory of the 'revolutionary offensive'.

The revolutionary actions of the years 1917-20 had propelled many former centrists, trade union leaders, parliamentarians, even former supporters of the war, towards the Comintern. The youth organisations in this period, as we have seen, consisted largely of spontaneously leftist young workers and intellectuals, many of whom had never seen a period of relative political "peace". Very few of those who met in Berlin in 1919 had ever led organisations which had to conduct patient mass agitation amongst workers fighting defensive battles in the workplace.

For example the Italian FGCI had, in 1920, only military squads and discussion circles. When advised to begin to form cells in the trade unions and workplaces (these were the days of the great factory occupations led by the Italian metal-workers union) they derided such work as "social-democratic". The "turn to the masses" met

a similar response from the French, Austrian and German youth sections.

At the March 1921 Congress of the CYI in Jena, Kun and Pogany expounded their theory of the revolutionary offensive. According to Pogany revolutionary action at all times was the only appropriate policy for the Comintern.

Here they received a sharply-worded letter from the ECCI instructing them to suspend the CYI's congress which would now take place in Moscow after the third Comintern congress. The "Jena Congress" ended without passing the theses on the revolutionary offensive proposed by Kun and Pogany.

The Comintern's directive is more grist to the mill of Cornell's thesis that by this time the CI had become a "monolith". However, he displays a total disregard for the political issues at stake; in one paragraph he bemoans the ECCI's attitude to the Jena Congress; in the next he bemoans the fate of Paul Levi, expelled from the KPD in February 1921, who advocated a position 180 degrees opposite to that of the CYI! Precisely because he is indifferent to the political conflict between the "revolutionary offensive" and the "united front" he reduces the CYI's position to one of abstract organisational questions.

THE THIRD COMINTERN CONGRESS AND THE CYI

The theses passed by the CI on July 12th 1921 resolved the "youth question" decisively in favour of political discipline and the united front policy. Whilst recognising the vanguard role that the youth had played in the formation of communist parties, the resolution stressed:

"With the establishment of the CI and in some countries Communist parties, the role of the revolutionary youth organisations changes. Relations between the

Young Communist organisations and the Communist party are fundamentally different from those between the revolutionary young socialist organisations and the social democratic parties." (Adler op.cit p231.)

It established the principle of the CYI's subordination to the Comintern and of the youth organisations' subordination to the national sections, whilst stating:

"Loss of political independence in no way implies loss of the organisational independence which is so essential for political education." (ibid p232.)

As regards methods of work the resolution committed the CYI sections to a campaign of agitation in the workplace. It said:

"The Communist youth organisations can no longer limit themselves to working in small propaganda circles . . . In conjunction with the Communist parties and the trade unions, they must organise the economic struggle." (ibid p232.)

At the youth congress which had convened formally on July 9th, the Comintern leadership did its utmost to convince the CYI of this new position. It was certainly not a case of undemocratic "railroading" as Cornell implies. This would have hardly suited the needs of the ECCI which regarded the CYI leaders as vital allies in the implementation of the "turn". In a way which was to become banned under Stalinism there was the fullest discussion of the problems of the new position. Münzenberg, Schüller and eventually even Polano were broken from the Bordigists (who remained intransigent) in a series of debates involving both Zinoviev and Trotsky.

In his speech to the CYI congress on the balance sheet of the Comintern congress Trotsky painstakingly exposed the contradictions within the "revolutionary offensive" theory:

"For victory it is sometimes necessary to move forward, sometimes to move backwards . . . But if one



The Spartakist uprising: Berlin 1919

reasons purely abstractly, and insists always on moving forward, if one refuses to rack his brain over strategy, on the assumption that everything can be superseded by an added exertion of revolutionary will, what results does one get then?"

Referring to the German "March days" of 1921 he added:

"This is undeniably a practical defeat. But if we were to say today in accordance with the foregoing theory of the offensive, only a new offensive can remedy the situation . . . we shall have behind us then not one sixth of the working class but only that section of the former one-sixth which has remained fit for combat". (Trotsky First Five Years of the Comintern Monad p304-5.)

Summarising the programmatic method upon which the Comintern's strategy was based, Trotsky argued that the day-to-day "economic" agitation, (in reality, mobilising the proletariat around immediate demands):

"is important for a Social Democratic party as a precondition for its parliamentary successes; for us communists the selfsame type of organisation is of importance as the practical premise for the victory of the revolution." (ibid p310.)

In stark contrast to the methods of the later Stalinised Comintern Trotsky aimed straight at the political questions behind the CYI's desire for autonomy. It was the strength of his arguments on these questions not an imperious appeal to party loyalty as Cornell would have it which led to the situation where the delegates could find "no arguments of principle" against the Comintern theses on the youth question.

The ECCYI was now moved to Moscow, with a sub-secretariat in Berlin. Münzenberg was criticised for his inability to give political direction in the previous period and replaced as secretary by Vujovich, although he kept his place on the ECCYI. The new committee of thirteen still included three leading proponents of the "revolutionary offensive" (Schüller, Schonhar, Tranquilli). This indicated not only that freedom of discussion still existed, but that the Comintern was eager to incorporate the ultra-left leaders into a representative political leadership.

Eventually despite certain resistance the youth organisations were reorganised along centralist lines and into factory cells. As a result, in 1922 the French, German and Italian sections all found themselves at the head of masses of non-party workers in united struggles. In Germany the KJD conducted economic agitation amongst young workers. In Italy having failed to stem the rise of fascism through military methods alone the FGCI turned to united front activity.

The French JC led a miners strike late in 1922, then with the occupation of the Ruhr turned their organisation to a mass anti-militarist campaign in 1923.

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern held in December 1922, whilst recognising the failure of some of the CYI sections to put into practice the positions of its own Second Congress, also reaffirmed and concretised the position on youth.

The Comintern's Resolution on the Communist Youth International contained the first real programmatic summary of the CYI's tasks. It analysed the plight of working class youth under the capitalist offensive and set out the key demands of the CI in regard to the economic struggles against the specific exploitation of youth and the struggle against conscription and militarism. Certainly in the resolutions of the Fourth Con-

gress the healthy traditions of the IUSYO and the early CYI were still alive.

What of the practice of the national sections in these years? Unfortunately Cornell's book is at its weakest in dealing with this period. The chapter dealing with both the "united Front and Bolshevisation" jumps very quickly to the year 1923. It is certainly true that 1923 marked the end of the Comintern's healthy period. The KPD leadership proved unable to break, at the decisive moment, with the reformists during the political crisis following French occupation of the Ruhr. The defeat of the German working class early in 1923 then led to the rise of an adventurist, ultra-left leadership in the KPD (which drew strong support from the KJD) in the shape of Ruth Fischer. At the same time Trotsky and the 1923 Opposition had begun the political fight in Russia against the bureaucratisation of the party. The Fifth Congress of the Comintern (1924) was to ratify the adventurist errors of the German, Bulgarian and Estonian communist parties and execute the process of bureaucratically stifling criticism of the Russian party under the mantle of "Bolshevisation".

In this atmosphere the CYI certainly does not seem to have flourished. After the Fifth Comintern Congress Cornell describes how the CI became not only politically but organisationally subordinate to the ECCI with its Stalinist leadership. Undoubtedly, following this the youth sections became mere recruiting schools, passively following the party leadership. By the end of the twenties most of the communist youth movements had adopted the same passive, subservient relation to the communist parties as the early Young Socialist groups had been compelled to adopt with regard to the social-democratic parties.

As Cornell notes in his conclusion, "The CYI is generally and often patronisingly dismissed, to the extent that one is even more aware of its existence, as an arcane footnote to the history of the communist movement." (p291)

The value of this book, despite its lack of a political perspective and its academic style, is that it resurrects in detail a movement whose lessons and experience we cannot and do not dismiss. A study of the CYI and the post 1915 IUSYO reveals a vital component of the forces that were to make up the early Comintern. Cornell's book provides us with the material needed to understand the debate on "political independence" and the reasons for the strength of ultra-leftism amongst the youth - even if at times Cornell is far from understanding the material himself.

If the CYI became a footnote in the history of the Comintern between 1924 and 1943, it was because Stalinism gutted the independent youth organisations of all the vitality which the early Comintern's tactics towards the CYI had sought to preserve. In the 1930s having first committed the German youth to a foolish aping of Nazi militarism, the Comintern set the seal on its political evolution by committing the youth of "democratic" France to the defence of their own "fatherland" and the youth of revolutionary Barcelona to death at the hands of the Stalinist-controlled secret police.

For Trotskyism, on the other hand, the work of rebuilding a revolutionary international always centred on youth; on their spontaneous dedication and critical spirit. It is in this tradition, a tradition which critically incorporates the experience of the early CYI, that we stand today.

Red Guards and Workers' Militia in the Russian Revolution

R A Wade

Stanford University Press (1984)

£23.50 hbk 402pp

During the great miners' strike **Workers Power** raised the call for the organised defence of picket lines by miners and other workers. We did so for two reasons. Anyone who had been near a picket line knew that some form of organised defence was a crying need. The systematic brutality of the police - executed with military precision - was successful in defeating us at Orgreave because our side could not counter with co-ordinated defensive action.

The other reason we raised the call went beyond the immediate needs of the picket line. By creating workers' defence organisations the workers can prepare for the future, prepare to exercise their own control in society. The workers' defence guard of today lays the basis for the workers militia of tomorrow, and this militia will not merely defend pickets and rallies. It will play its part in destroying the capitalist state and in guarding the workers' state. Fantastic? To the blinkered reformist who mutters inanely about ballots not bullets, yes. To the centrists for whom the time for such bold demands is never quite right, yes. But it is not at all fantastic to either the worker, face to face with the state's thugs on a picket, or to the revolutionary who can use the working class' past experience of military struggle, to teach the militants of today.

Of invaluable assistance in passing on this experience is Rex Wade's book on the Red Guards in Russia in 1917. Although it is an academic work it is not dry. And, although the author is no revolutionary, his research has provided ample evidence justifying revolutionary strategy and tactics.

Wade's story of the Red Guard begins with the February 1917 revolution which overthrew the despotic rule of the Tsar. This revolution was a workers' revolution, but one without a communist leadership. The result was instability.

The liberal bourgeoisie in the shape of the Cadet Party, together with a variety of "socialist" (i.e. Menshevik and right wing Social Revolutionaries) compromisers, formed a bourgeois Provisional government.

The workers, however, established (in Petrograd and later in other cities) their Soviet. Despite being led by Mensheviks, it was an alternative to the Provisional government and was increasingly seen to be so by the workers. Dual power existed.

The situation of dual power was reflected in the militias that had sprung up during the February events. During the revolution workers in alliance with soldiers, worked alongside students and middle class elements. The talk was that a people's militia of all the classes could police society. However, immediately after the revolution differing concepts of this militia emerged. The Cadets argued that it would be like the British constabulary! They began to build a City militia along these lines.

The working class were rightly suspicious of this endeavour. Their militias - which had developed spontaneously during the rising - were seen to have a political, class role and not merely a public order role. Increasingly the Bolsheviks too realised that the workers' militia, despite their emergence as organs of "democracy", were in fact organs of the working class.

As the revolution deepened, the duality of power sharpened. The workers' militia movement strove towards a greater degree of organisation. An early attempt at a conference and the establishment of a cross factory organisation failed. But the leaders of the movement, at a rank and file level persevered. They struggled to build a 'Red Guard'. As one worker at a meeting declared:

"If we had a Red Guard, then they would take us seriously... At the head of districts (demonstrations) will go armed guardsmen and then they will not tear up the red flag." (p89)

The Bolsheviks recognising their significance displayed a positive attitude to the workers' militias. Rank and file Bolsheviks in particular were instrumental in uniting the various militias under the control of a

central Komendatura.

In early July 1917 an attempt was made to disarm the workers. This was part of the counter-revolutionary offensive that triggered the 'July Days', the subsequent attacks on the Bolsheviks and, following the abortive coup attempt by General Kornilov, brought the masses of workers over to the Bolsheviks. While the forces of reaction had some successes, by and large the militias were able to preserve their supplies of arms.

The Kornilov coup attempt actually breathed new and moreover, revolutionary, life into the militias. The Red Guard, as they became known, was increasingly the real armed power in Petrograd, and Petrograd was the centre of the revolution. As the government lunged from one crisis to another a decisive clash between the workers and the bourgeoisie became inevitable. Kerensky - supposedly a socialist - was desperately trying to hold together a government committed to capitalism and to continuing the war. The Soviet, moving under Bolshevik influence, stood in the way of these plans demanding that every order of the government be countersigned by the Soviet.

The crisis came to a head on the eve of the second All Russia Congress of Soviets. The government moved to close down Bolshevik papers and arrest Bolshevik leaders. In response the Red Guard, summoned by the Soviet's Military Revolutionary Committee, moved into action on October 24th - 25th. Bridges, utilities, key buildings and military installations were taken by Red Guards in alliance with revolutionary soldiers and sailors.

Soon the whole city, except for the Winter Palace where Kerensky



and his government sat, was in the hands of the Red Guards. No-one wanted to be left out of the action. Wade reports that a Bolshevik leader at the Wireless Telegraph factory when to summon his militia:

"When he arrived at the factory, he found not only the guardsmen but both shifts of workers, in full force, wanting to join. Ten to twelve men had to be left to guard the factory, but since no-one wanted to stay behind, Vasilev solved the problem by choosing those with the poorest shoes - a slushy snow was falling - to remain." (p205)

Eventually the Red Guards and soldiers took the Winter Palace with very few casualties.

Wade's book does not only deal with Petrograd. He tells the story of Red Guards in Saratov and Kharkov too. What emerges from all the accounts, however, are two vital lessons. First, that workers can organise their own defence no matter what odds are stacked against them. Secondly that a workers' militia is indispensable for the revolution. For although breaking the morale of troops and even winning over sections of these troops is important to break the armed power of the bosses, get arms for the workers etc., the troops are no substitute for class organisations. As Wade concludes:

"The swing of the 'neutral' army units in the July Days was vividly remembered in October. Even though not under firm Bolshevik control, the Red Guards did provide that dependable element of active support for a seizure of power in the name of the Soviet. This was their great significance in the October Revolution in Petrograd." (p 207)

This book is well worth reading. If you cannot afford it yourself then put it on order through your local library.

Mark Hoskisson

Cuba - Radical Face of Stalinism

John Lister

Left View Books (1985)

£4.95 pbk 168pp

The Cuban Revolution proved to be an acid test for the groups claiming adherence to Trotskyism. The overthrow of the US-backed Batista regime in 1959, and its aftermath, raised a seemingly unique problem for Trotskyist theory: how could a petty bourgeois nationalist grouping, Castro's July 26th Movement (J26M), not only overthrow a pro-imperialist dictatorship but go on to overthrow capitalism and establish a self proclaimed 'socialist'

state?

The range of responses advanced by the 'Trotskyist' movement to solve the Cuban conundrum was diverse to say the least. The American Socialist Workers Party, along with the Mandel-led International Secretariat, decided that the Castroites were Marxists, indeed 'unconscious Trotskyists', and that the new Cuban regime was a healthy workers' state. The British Socialist Labour League (SLL) and the International Committee took a diametrically opposite view. Insisting, quite correctly, that the J26M was far from being a revolutionary Marxist party, the SLL mechanically concluded that Cuba was still a capitalist state albeit in a Bonapartist form. It is to this manifest dilemma of the 'Trotskyist' movement that John Lister of **Socialist Viewpoint**, addresses the central thrust of his book.

Lister is not concerned to produce a mere academic or abstract analysis of the origins and nature of the Castro regime and the 'Trotskyists' response to it:

"the approach of this book . . . is one directed towards the problem of revolutionary perspective and programme for the workers and peasants of Central America as a crucial component of the international struggle."

Any such claim would merit serious attention in the pages of this journal. This is only added to by the authors frank intention to show the 'unhealthy', i.e. Stalinist, nature of the Cuban regime and the necessity of a political revolution against it.

The history of Cuba in the decades preceding 1959 was one of imperialist domination by the US. The 1952 army coup by which the dictator Batista gained power was itself US sponsored. American involvement in the Cuban economy was such that by 1959 US investment topped \$1 billion. Furthermore, the US companies controlled 40% of the island's sugar production, its major commodity. The hallmark of the Cuban economy before 1959 was stagnation with consequent massive unemployment (15% of the workforce in the 1950s) and under-employment, particularly in the countryside.

The J26M and its 1,500 strong Rebel Army, which after a two year guerilla war toppled Batista, had no unified or coherent programme except to establish the political and economic independence of Cuba from the US, and initiate some internal democratic reforms. This political incoherence is scarcely surprising since, as Lister acknowledges, the J26M was 'hardly a party at all in the conventional sense'.

In truth, although Lister fails to say it, the J26M was a miniature popular front; on its left were the 'Marxists' like Guevara, while on the right were the anti-communist bourgeois nationalists like Hubert Matos.

As for Castro himself, Lister declares:

"it is probably now impossible to ascertain for sure the motives or ideology behind Castro's actions from 1953-59." (pp15-16)

Lister is too cautious. From 1953, the year of Castro's abortive raid on the Moncada Barracks, he was undoubtedly a revolutionary bourgeois nationalist, despite the 'socialist' credentials thrust on him retrospectively by his Stalinist and 'Trotskyist' apologists. Castro's pronounced anti-socialism in these years ('Never has the J26M talked of socialism or nationalising industry', May 1958) was a major factor in securing the considerable support the J26M received from sections of the Cuban Bourgeoisie. Nor were Castro's actions on seizing power those of a 'socialist'. As Lister points out,

"the policies of the new Cuban revolutionary government remained for the first year restricted to radical reforms within the framework of capitalism". (pp15-16)

Yet by the end of 1960 Castro had moved to nationalise not only US owned property but Cuban owned banks, large and medium businesses; in fact 80% of Cuba's industrial capacity. The reasons for this dramatic change in the course of the Cuban revolution are to be found in the worsening situation (i.e. US imperialist aggression) and the internal pressure from the radicalised Cuban peasantry, and the rural and industrial proletariat.

The Cuban working class, despite an unmistakably revolutionary past, had been saddled in the years before 1959 with a yellow trade union apparatus devoid of even the most minimal reformist programme. Although the J26M conspicuously failed to mobilise or organise the working class in its guerilla war against Batista, the new regime's moderate capitalist reforms aroused the expectations of the masses (Cuba witnessed a spate of strikes in 1959). At the same time these reforms drove the Cuban bourgeoisie into the arms of US Imperialism. Although Castro initially tried to strike a deal with US imperialism (including a fawning visit to the USA in April 1959) the US engaged in direct economic sabotage of the new regime which was to culminate in mid-1960 with the cutting of the Cuban sugar quota in the USA.

Thus Castro was posed with a dilemma; either he could capitulate to US pressure, curb the demands

of the masses and strike out against the left of the J26M which reflected the pressure of these demands within the government. Alternatively he could refuse to bow to Washington's demands and lean on the left to disarm the bourgeois counter-revolution and confront the imperialists. It was this latter course which was embarked upon.

Yet the wholesale nationalisations of the Cuban economy and the eventual overthrow of capitalist property relations was carefully controlled by Castro from above. Although Castro needed to both arm and mobilise the Cuban workers and peasants, the organisation through which such processes took place (e.g. the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution set up in 1960) were always tightly controlled. At no stage in the revolution were the workers able to exercise their revolutionary control through genuine workers councils, i.e. soviets.

However, Castro's political stifling of the Cuban working class, amongst which the J26M had virtually no organised base, would have been impossible without the good offices of the Stalinist Popular Socialist Party (PSP) which, as Lister points out, was;

"the only political formation which emerged from the Revolution with any solid structure and expertise in controlling movements of the working class." (p17)

Castro's initial hostility to the PSP (reciprocated as it happened since the PSP was not 'beyond giving' Batista details of J26M hideouts) began to wane in 1959, as Castro began to value the PSP's exemplary, even by Stalinist standards, record of repressing any independent working class action or initiative.

The necessity of utilising the PSP, coupled with an international situation which made it imperative that Cuba received support from the PSP's masters in the Kremlin, encouraged Castro and the J26M (suitably shorn of anti-PSP elements) to fuse with, in fact takeover, the PSP to form the Integrated Revolutionary Organisation. In 1965 this organisation became the Cuban Communist Party. The fused organisation became a Stalinist party but the old clique of Stalinist bureaucrats who had led the PSP failed to oust Castro and his clique.

Considerable conflict soon erupted between the J26M leaders and the old guard PSPers (culminating in purges of veteran Stalinists like Anibal Escalante. But as Lister shows in some detail, the emergent Cuban CP (CCP) was thoroughly Stalinist in both its organisational methods and politics, and became the mirror image of the 'Communist Parties'

which reign in the Eastern bloc.

Lister marshals a wealth of evidence to show the bureaucratic and Stalinist nature of the Cuban regime. It is pointed out that the CCP held its first congress only in 1975 - ten years after it was founded and then only to adopt an even more bureaucratic Constitution! Lister also shows how through the banning of candidates putting forward any political manifestos in party, municipal or National Assembly elections political discussion and differences are stifled, except when encouraged by the tiny group of leaders at the top of the party.

In two chapters on Cuban foreign policy, Lister gives the lie to the idea that Castro has somehow pursued a revolutionary strategy in relation to the class struggle abroad. Having traced the disastrous 'guerillaist' strategy adopted for Latin America in the 1960s, a policy which often led to clashes with the Soviet bureaucracy, he goes on to look at the post 1967 policy which was linked in much more closely with the Soviet Union. Thus the endorsement of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the uncritical promoting of the popular unity government of Allende which led Chilean workers to disaster in 1973, the poems of praise Castro heaped on the post-Franco Spanish government ("Suarez is a brilliant and capable man, and together with Juan Carlos, he has written a very important chapter in Spanish history." p67), the endorsing of the crushing of Solidarnosc in Poland and the backing given to the Ethiopian government in its efforts to break the Eritrean struggle for self-determination, are all examples of Castro's Stalinist foreign policy.

Lister's book ends with three useful chapters devoted to exposing the hopeless and opportunist positions developed on the revolutions in Eastern Europe and China by the Pablo/Mandel International Secretariat and on Cuba by both the Mandel/Hansen USec and the Healey/Lambert International Committee.

The weakness of the **Radical Face Of Stalinism** lies in the unacknowledged analysis which underlies it. It is the "Structural Assimilation" analysis developed by Tim Wohlforth in the 1960s which argues that the creation of workers' states outside the USSR has ultimately been the process of the extension of the property relations established by the workers' revolution in Russia. In short, the creation of the new workers' states is a result of their assimilation into the USSR - a process not dissimilar to an amoeba swallowing a food particle. The actual process of social transformation is described as taking place

within the state apparatus:

"by a process of purging a sector of the state bureaucracy, the inundation of the state apparatus with supporters of the Stalinists, and the fusion of the state and communist party bureaucracies". (The Theory of Structural Assimilation. T. Wohlforth)

Wohlforth never managed to "stretch" his theory to fit the Cuban case. For obvious reasons; Cuba did not border the USSR, nor was it occupied by the Soviet Armed Forces. The PSP "agents of the Kremlin" far from leading the overthrow of capitalism were in fact dragged, complaining, along behind the J26M. The theory was reduced, in the case of Cuba, to saying nothing more than that without the existence of and aid from the Soviet Union, Castro could not have been able to break with the US and expropriate the capitalists, a position to be found in Lister's book.

The more dangerous aspects of Wohlforth's theory lay in its non-Marxist definition of the state. For Wohlforth the crucial question was not "what property forms does the state defend?" but rather "in whose hands is the state machine?" Through a process of "fusion and purging" the Stalinists could gain control of the, now, "deformed workers' state". The expropriation of the remaining private capitalists, and the introduction of planning were subsidiary "mopping up operations".

These positions clearly influence Lister's account of the revolution in Cuba. It is not at all clear from the book **when** Cuba became a degenerate workers' state although Lister says it was **"no longer a capitalist state by the end of 1960"** (p21). Nor is the criteria used apparent, although this date would suggest that for Lister the nationalisations were the key factor.

Certainly the introduction of planning and the monopoly of foreign trade are barely worth a mention in Lister's account. If this is the case Lister, like the **Militant**, would have great difficulty in not extending this label to such states as Syria, Algeria, South Yemen, Ethiopia, etc.

Neither is it clear how Lister characterises the nature of the state and government in the course of 1960. Did it evolve peacefully? If so doesn't this challenge some fundamental tenets of Marxism? On all these questions **Cuba Radical Face of Stalinism** remains vague or silent. The reader who wants a Marxist account of the Cuban Revolution will have to turn to **The Degenerated Revolution; the origins and nature of the Stalinist states** published by **Workers Power** and the **Irish Workers Group**.

Jon Lewis

Jamaica Under Manley - Dilemmas of Socialism and Democracy

Michael Kaufman
Zed £6.95 282pp

This book gives a comprehensive coverage of the economic and political structures of Jamaica and of its role in the world economy, as a backdrop to the Peoples National Party (PNP) Government of 1972-80 under its leader Michael Manley. It examines the struggle of the PNP for a 'third path' in the Caribbean through social democracy.

The book is also in part a polemic with other interpretations of the nature of Manley's government. Was it social democratic or was it a bourgeois nationalist-populist party with a Fabian facade? Kaufman prefers the former.

He makes clear that while he was in total agreement with Manley's brand of social democracy, he is critical of the PNP for its failure to implement its social democratic programme. Manley may have been sincere in his attempt to bring about social change, agrees Kaufman, but what he lacked was a realistic and consistent strategy for bringing about that change.

Three lessons can be learnt from that period according to Kaufman. Firstly, that changes were possible in Jamaica and that;

"neither the existing situation of dependency nor the desire to preserve and extend democratic institutions prevented such a transformation."

Secondly, the classic social democratic model and the traditional Leninist, dual power model do not apply to the Jamaican reality. Nonetheless, he claims, democratic traditions and a Parliamentary system would aid a peaceful socialist transformation - supplemented by new institutions at grass-roots level.

Thirdly:

"There is obviously no guarantee that local or international military forces would allow for such peaceful transition. In such an eventuality the armed self-defiance of the people would be necessary."

Clearly, Kaufman has learnt as little as Manley. It was precisely the Jamaican economy's dependency on

loans from the IMF with the resulting austerity measures that made impossible any hope of a socialist transformation. When massive strike waves broke out in 1979/80 it was Manley resting on his democratic institutions that smashed them with army intervention.

The dependent economy, in Jamaica as elsewhere, is integrally woven into the imperialist market. The political institutions that exist in Jamaica are those of bourgeois democracy, not neutral democratic bodies that can serve better societies of the future. They serve the present interests of the business and propertied classes locally and internationally. To fight imperialism will require a consistent fight against their capitalist agents in Jamaica.

Kaufman believes there is no guarantee that imperialism will not intervene. This is not a possibility, it's a certainty. Witness Grenada. Why bother then holding out for such a "peaceful" option in the first place?

When Kaufman argues that:

"a sudden and mass expropriation of private property would have been economically and politically devastating to Jamaican society."

he really does show that he understands nothing about socialism - nor the strategy to bring it about.

Neither the local capitalists nor the imperialists are going to turn a blind eye whilst left reformists of the Kaufman ilk pluck little bits of property from them bit by bit. They will fight tooth and nail to preserve their rule. There will be no breathing space for workers in this situation; there will be room for only one strategy that can lead the Jamaican workers to victory. That entails a sharp clash with the capitalist class. Failure to do this will leave a fifth column for imperialism in Jamaica, a focus for counter-revolution. A workers' militia based on workers' and peasants' councils, a workers' government cancelling all debts and enforcing full expropriation, appealing for solidarity from all the Caribbean workers; that is the perspective that should inform a serious fight for socialism in Jamaica.

Laura Williams.

► continued from back cover

to a united and coherent offensive to overthrow it.

We stand for a rank and file movement of the militant minority to win the regular election and recallability of all union officials and the fixing of their salaries at the average of their members.

We fight to build a revolutionary alternative leadership in the unions, and a revolutionary wing in the Labour Party and the LPYS as part of our fight to build a revolutionary party. Our goal, as our name proclaims, is workers' power and nothing less.

Workers Power and its fraternal allies, the **Irish Workers Group**, the **Gruppe Arbeitermacht** (Germany) and **Pouvoir Ouvrier** (France) are by no means yet parties capable of challenging Stalinism and social democracy for leadership across the whole range of working class struggles. We are restricted by our size to arguing for our programme, our tactics and strategy with the proletarian vanguard, who still, by and large, give allegiance to various centrist organisations. But we seek at the same time the maximum involvement in the class struggle. We fight for our ideas whilst rendering the maximum assistance to workers in action.

As well as new revolutionary parties, the working class needs a new revolutionary International. The last revolutionary international, the Fourth, collapsed into centrism between 1948 and 1951, and disintegrated organisationally in 1953. Only its degenerated fragments exist today. What is needed is a democratic centralist International, a true World Party of Socialist Revolution.

As a first step along this path, **Workers Power** with its Irish, German, French and Chilean co-thinkers has founded the **Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI)**, with the object of achieving an international democratic-centralist tendency. On this basis we can and will go further along the road to building national revolutionary parties, a revolutionary International, and the establishment of the world socialist order.

Where we stand

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation basing itself upon the programme and principles developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the nineteenth century, by V. I. Lenin and the first four congresses of the Communist International in the first decades of this century, and by Leon Trotsky and the first two congresses of the Fourth International in the years up to 1948.

Capitalism is a system based on the systematic exploitation of the proletariat. It is doomed to recurring crises caused by the contradiction between the enormous expansive powers of socialised production and the fact that private ownership determines that such production must be for profit.

The competitive struggle between capitals brings anarchy into national and world economy. Millions starve while food is destroyed to maintain prices. Commodities rot or rust unsold in a world of acute want for the majority of humanity.

In its final, imperialist stage, the major capitalist powers - USA, the EEC countries and Japan cruelly exploit the "Third World", crippling its economic development within the limits that can realise super-profits for the great banks of Wall Street and the City of London, and the international corporations.

Only the abolition of private property in the large-scale means of production, and the creation of a planned economy can end forever exploitation and oppression. Only the abolition of class society can remove the root causes of the oppression of women. It is not men, as a sex, who develop and perpetuate this oppression, as feminists claim. Working class men are the natural allies of working class women. They are not the enemy. It is a class system based on private property in the means of production that requires for its continued functioning the use of women as unpaid domestic labourers that ensures the continued existence of this oppression.

Only the working class can lead the oppressed masses of the planet to the achievement of this historic task. To do so requires a social

revolution that smashes the armed power of the capitalist class - its state - replacing it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, founded upon workers' councils and the armed militia of the working class.

Such a revolution must be Permanent. Whilst starting from the immediate tasks facing the workers and peasants - which in the "Third World" includes the land question and national independence - it cannot stop at intermediate "democratic" stages without the working class suffering a heavy defeat. The political power of the proletariat (in alliance with the other oppressed classes such as the poor peasants) is essential to resolve these "capitalist" tasks as well as to move forwards towards a planned economy and socialism. The latter is indeed impossible to achieve within an isolated nation. Thus the revolution must be international - its fundamental task is its extension.

The so-called "communist" countries are in fact degenerate workers' states. They are workers' states in that the bourgeoisie has been overthrown and capitalist exploitation suppressed. Yet their planned economies remain hampered by a parasitic caste of bureaucrats. This caste has usurped political power from the proletariat and pursues a counter-revolutionary international strategy: "socialism in one country". The "Communist Parties" in these states, and their supporters throughout the world, are Stalinists. While revolutionary communists (Trotskyists) defend unconditionally the workers' states, they are also a force for political revolution within them to smash the bureaucratic caste and restore or create workers' democracy based on soviets - workers' councils.

In the advanced capitalist states, the proletariat is repeatedly held back from the struggle for power by the social democratic (or Labour) parties, the trade union bureaucracy and the Stalinist parties. These bodies - whilst based on the workers' organisations - pursue a bourgeois policy, sacrificing the historic aims of the proletariat to reforms within capitalism. However, in periods of crisis, capitalism seeks to recoup these concessions and a crisis of

leadership ensues in the labour movement, which the proletariat must resolve in order to win.

To this end we fight inside the workers' movement to link existing struggles - even ones for only partial demands - to the struggle for working class power. In each struggle for pay, against closures, for political rights we fight for forms of organisation and elements of workers' control that bring workers into conflict not only with an individual capitalist, but with capitalist power and the capitalist system. Through transitional demands the masses can find a bridge between their present struggles and everyday demands and the tasks of socialist revolution.

On the basis of these principles we give unconditional support to all national liberation struggles, including that of the Republican movement in Northern Ireland.

We stand for no platform for fascists. Against all immigration controls. Against discrimination, deportations and harassment meted out to blacks by the police. For the right of blacks to organise in their own defence, and for the duty of the labour movement to practically assist them. Against racism and racists in the trade unions.

We fight for complete social, legal and political equality for women. Equal pay for equal work. Free abortion and contraception on demand. We stand for a working class women's movement that can fight as an integral part of the labour movement for workers' power. Only working class power can socialise domestic labour and release women from their centuries old oppression.

We fight for the liberation of gays from the persecution and discrimination that is their lot under capitalism. We fight against the oppression and super-exploitation - via the family, the state and at work - that youth suffer.

In the unions we fight for the total independence of the trade unions from the state, for militant class policies, for immediate, partial and transitional demands which link today's struggles under capitalism

continued inside ►